

WISE Acadia camps aim to break stereotypes in campus-wide effort

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WISE Acadia (Women in Science and Engineering) is preparing to host their annual camp, which takes place every year in August. For four days, a group of female students from grade 8 and 9 experience Acadia and a wide variety of activities and events to learn about disciplines in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math). This year, WISE Acadia sent out an open invitation to faculty and staff members across all disciplines on campus to participate, develop a presentation or teach a workshop for the camps, in an effort to promote and host an inclusive camp.

WISE camps feature fun hands-on activities in the STEAM fields, led by Acadia undergraduate students.

Dr. Randy Lynn Newman, WISE Acadia coordinator, says this year's goal is to include as many different disciplines as possible in an attempt to challenge stereotypes of what it means to be a professional in science.

"We want to challenge the stereotypes of what it is to be a scientist and what skills it takes to be one," she says. "For example, we want to showcase the importance of the "A" in STEAM by highlighting the important role that creativity and imagination play in scientific discovery."

Research shows young girls lose interest in STEAM professions when they reach a certain age, and WISE Acadia's goal is to understand why this happens and to showcase the wide range of possibilities involved in a STEAM profession.

To achieve this goal, WISE Acadia is working closely with Acadia's School of Education. Dr. Lynn Aylward, Ph.D. program coordinator in the School of Education, started collaborating with WISE in 2017. She says this is a necessary collaboration because of the role teachers and school play in influencing youth.

"It is important to have an Education member involved in WISE because teachers have a profound influence on how youth (of all genders) view STEAM and their possible participation in STEAM activities

in any context,” Aylward says. “There is a significant amount of research that shows how mathematics and science educational experiences shape girls’ aspirational thinking and career or study choices.”

Aylward adds that the camps are beneficial for both the girls who attend and for Acadia students who volunteer because it’s an opportunity for Acadia female students to take on mentorship roles.

“I think Acadia students’ experience and expertise is a valuable contribution to our campus effort to close the gender gap in the STEAM areas of post-secondary study and work,” she says.

Similarly, for the young girls who attend the camp, it’s important to interact with university students who are closer to them in age and studying these disciplines as they can get a clear idea of careers and studies they can tackle in the future. Many of these Acadia students become mentors to the girls during camp.

As the camps continue to grow each year, the Acadia community becomes more involved. Young girls have an opportunity to stay in residence and have a full campus experience.

“This is truly a campus-wide effort,” says Newman. “And it’s great for the girls to see what it’s like to be a part of not only STEAM, but Acadia as well.”

This year’s camp will run from August 6th to 9th.

Find out how to register [here](#).

Learn more about WISE Acadia [here](#).

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