

# ExxonMobil Bernard Harris Summer Science Camp at SWOSU Encourages Future Innovators

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The ExxonMobil Bernard Harris Summer Science Camp at Southwestern Oklahoma State University will immerse 50 area middle school students in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) from June 10-22 on the Weatherford campus.

The camp, one of only 20 such camps in the nation, is an effort to reinforce critical-thinking skills, encourage innovation and curb summer learning loss. ExxonMobil Foundation and The Harris Foundation, along with SWOSU, sponsor the camp.

Wayne Trail, associate professor in the SWOSU Department of Chemistry & Physics, is director of the camp that has the maximum 50 participants. Students are coming from Oklahoma City, McLoud, Burns Flat, Midwest City, Tulsa, Edmond, El Reno, Spencer, Hooker, Moore, Noble, Lookeba, Mustang, Kiowa, Snyder, Clinton, Arapaho, Bethany and Weatherford.

As part of the hands-on, STEM-based curriculum, students will participate in a “Space Day” competition, where they will be challenged to create and design durable spacesuit swatches using household items, which mimic protective materials. Teams will test the strength of their samples using an “impact tester” that imitates the rigors experienced during spacewalks.

Campers will hear from veteran astronaut Dr. Harris on June 12 at 10:30 a.m. in the Memorial Student Center Ballroom when he shares his inspirational journey to become the first African American to walk in space and the extreme elements he encountered during his two shuttle missions. Harris and ExxonMobil engineers will work alongside campers, offering guidance as students use math and science skills to construct their designs.

“The program delivers engaging instruction and mentorship to underserved youth at 20 camps across the country,” said Harris, veteran astronaut and camp founder. “Through this opportunity, students have access to highly qualified educators and professionals who work to develop students’ leadership and problem-solving skills, which are critical components of success.”

The all-expenses-paid camp focuses on teamwork and hands-on activities such as building and designing rockets, bridges and space suits. Area teachers will show campers science and math at work in their community through field excursions to local ecosystems and trips to area museums.

“ExxonMobil is committed to encouraging interest in science and math,” said Suzanne McCarron, president of the ExxonMobil Foundation. “These camps are one way to equip our nation’s youth with skills needed to be competitive in an increasingly global economy.”

This summer marks the 7<sup>th</sup> consecutive year ExxonMobil Foundation and The Harris Foundation have partnered with SWOSU to offer science camps that help close the achievement gap.