

# The Crimson White

## UA Math and Science Mentoring Program Wins \$25,000 from Pepsi Refresh Challenge

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by Ashanka Kumari

The University of Alabama Center for Ethics & Social Responsibility's CollegeFirst Advanced Placement Mentoring Initiative won a \$25,000 award from the Pepsi Refresh online voting competition.

CollegeFirst trains university students to implement a Summer Advanced Placement Institute for high school students enrolled in an AP course during the upcoming school year, said Olivia Grider, coordinator of the CollegeFirst initiative.

"Winning this award is a great honor, particularly because recipients were chosen through public voting," Grider said.

"CollegeFirst competed against thousands of deserving programs across the country. The fact that the initiative received the second most votes of any project in the nation demonstrates the value of the initiative to our state, its children and future."

In June 2011, CollegeFirst hosted its second annual Summer Advanced Placement Institute for more than 215 high school students from six school districts in Birmingham, Tuscaloosa and Huntsville, Grider said.

More than 70 college student mentors from UA, UAB and UAH led the students through three weeks of intensive lessons to prepare them for AP calculus, AP chemistry and AP biology in the upcoming school year.

"CollegeFirst received \$25,000 and will use the money to expand the initiative," Grider said. "Costs include supplies for biology and chemistry labs, teaching materials and staff."

Of the 70 student mentors, 40 were UA students who earned Honors or New College credit for participating in the CollegeFirst service-learning course, Grider said.

One of CollegeFirst's goals is to increase the number of Alabama students attending and graduating from college, Grider said. Students who pass AP exams are three times more likely to earn a college degree than students who do not pass, according to the College Board.



UA student Kristi Wu (right) and Tuscaloosa County High School student Marika Gray identify an unknown acid by determining its pH level.  
*Photo by Drew Hoover*

“This initiative provides successful college students as both tutors and mentors, helping increase the number of Alabama students who will be ready not only to attend college, but to excel in college,” CESR Director Stephen Black said. “The experience benefits university students as well because, in order to teach a concept, one must not only grasp it intuitively, but fully understand the reasoning and logical steps involved.”

CESR assists students in developing a distinctive definition of moral and civic maturity, making the values and skills of citizenship a hallmark of a University of Alabama education, according to the press release.

“By playing an integral role in an innovative education reform effort, these students are also developing a sense of their obligations toward fellow citizens and a commitment to the common good,” Black said.

To see programs CollegeFirst competed against, go to [refresheverything.com/grant-recipients](http://refresheverything.com/grant-recipients) and see the \$25,000 amount category.