NEWS RELEASE

For the second year, the University of Alabama teamed up with A+ College Ready to offer Computer Science Education (CSE) training to more K-12 teachers in Alabama.

The workshop is the latest in their efforts to help to expand computer science access in K-12 education in the state of Alabama, which has seen its number of students learning some form of computer science increase from 27 in 2007 to more than 1,700 last year.

"This (workshop) builds from our past work with the National Science Foundation and Code.org to train our teachers," said Dr. Jeff Gray, UA professor of computer science, and the workshop organizer. "As always, it is great to collaborate with A+ College Ready. I look forward to many more discussions in ways that we can help support its CS efforts."

This year, the keynote speakers were Dr. Dan Garcia, professor of CS at the University of California at Berkeley, and Crystal Furman, director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment at the College Board. Each year, select Alabama educators involved with the AP Summer Institute travel across the state and country to train fellow high school teachers in AP CS Principles, the entry-level computer science course.

Carol Yarbrough, computer science instructor at the Alabama School of Fine Arts, was a programmer for more than 20 years before becoming a teacher. Yarbrough is a member of the College Board's AP CS Principles Development Committee, a Code.org facilitator for Code.org's AP CS Principles course.
She was involved in two, three-year AP Computer Science pilot projects with Gray from 2013-16. She described the growth in trained teachers in Alabama as "exponential."

"This week's workshop will include sessions that teachers said they want to learn more about – abstraction, algorithms, performance tasks in AP CS Principles and teaching the advanced AP Computer Science A course. This further illustrates how CS instruction has grown in Alabama," Yarbrough said. "There were a total of three approved AP CS teachers in the state when I first started teaching, and I was one of the three," she said. "Now we have more than 130."

"What's interesting is some of these teachers were teaching math, then one class of CS, and now it's nothing but CS. It's amazing and so fun to teach; the kids get so excited about it. I'll have a kid finish debugging a program, and they'll start jumping up and down saying, 'it worked.'"

Gray is co-chairing Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey's Advisory Council for Computer Science Education. The council consists of educators, business and industry representatives and others that work in or advocate for computer science education.

Equip. Empower. Expect More.

This advisory council will make recommendations for the expansion of computer science education. While the council will prioritize computer science opportunities and courses for students, it will also focus on the professional development of teachers, ensuring Alabama educators will be better trained to teach for the modern economy, according to the governor's office.

Read full news release from the University of Alabama

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