

An essay of Welcome

by

The Program's Young Counselors.

Dear prospective student,

The nature of study at the Ross Young Scholars Program is one of mathematical discovery. For the eight weeks of the program, students are immersed in a world quite unlike anything they have seen before. For most of them, this is the first time they will be asked to consider entirely new questions and to develop approaches and methods that they have not seen before. The standard classroom approach of presenting facts for students to learn, is entirely discarded here. Instead we build a community of scholars who struggle with age old questions and attempt to discover the facts for themselves, and to recognize which of their discoveries will be the most useful.

The benefits of living in this community and participating in this distinctive style of learning are immense. The students gain an extraordinarily deep appreciation of the ideas they have tackled and more importantly, they gain some understanding of what scientific thinking is all about. During the course of the summer, something very important happens to our participants. For some it comes early on, and for others the change is more gradual, but by the end of the summer it is impossible to miss. They begin to relish their ability to discover things on their own and eagerly search for patterns and ideas wherever they possibly can. Once the spark of creative thought is lit, it burns bright in them for their time here and, we hope, for the rest of their lives.

However, along with these benefits come several serious responsibilities. What we have here is truly a community of scholars and its existence and character is dependent on the participation of every individual at the program. We, the counselors, strive to foster an atmosphere of enthusiasm and discovery but in the end it is the students themselves who must devote every ounce of their energy to the challenge set for them. A student can get as much out of the program as he or she desires if the student is willing to place working and thinking above all other concerns for the summer. Conversely, a student who does not put forth his or her best effort will not reap the full benefits of the summer and ultimately will detract from the success of the entire community. Fortunately, the process of thinking and discovering is so exciting that most students find this responsibility to be a privilege rather than a burden. Being able to contribute to the enthusiasm and vitality of the group can be quite an inspiration to our youngsters. But most importantly the student must find inspiration from within, for the course that they set out on is not for the weak of heart. The continued success of the program then rests solidly in the interest and enthusiasm of our participants.

We hope you can find this enthusiasm in yourself as you consider the program, and especially as you do your exploration and problem solving.

Good luck!

1991 Program Counselors.