IMS partners with community college for C-STEP

BY MIKE SHUTAK
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MOREHEAD CITY — Dr. Joel Fodrie, associate professor at the UNC Institute of Marine Sciences, is just old enough to remember Charles Kuralt of CBS News saying UNC is “a university of the people, by the people and for the people.” That is why he agreed to take part in the Carolina Student Transfer Excellence Program Monday, giving a presentation and a tour of IMS to 10 students from Carteret Community College. The program, started by UNC Chapel Hill in 2006, is a special event and advising program for low- and moderate-income high school students at local community colleges seeking associate degrees.

C-STEP is a program for students who intend to enroll at UNC-Chapel Hill. Taking part in the program guarantees eventual admission to UNC, while also offering special events and advising.

According to the UNC website, UNC guarantees to meet 100 percent of every admitted student’s demonstrated need through grants, scholarships and loans. Qualified C-STEP students will be offered to enroll as Carolina Covenant scholars, a program that enables low-socioeconomic students to graduate debt-free.

CCC got involved in C-STEP in June of 2010. Melinda Rouse, C-STEP coordinator for the college, said it was the fourth community college to join the program.

“Right now, we have four students in the program,” she said. “We’re hoping to have nine more; their applications are submitted and they’re awaiting responses.”

Dr. Fodrie said the students who came to IMS Monday were very engaged and attentive. All four C-STEP participants from CCC, as well as six of the applicants, came to his presentation and tour of IMS.

“They had several questions about the science we pursue,” he said, “and about life and school in Chapel Hill. When we showed them some of the fish and crabs we are holding in our wet lab, they were very hands on.”

Dr. Fodrie gave the students a 20-minute talk on the type of work done at the lab, then gave them a tour of IMS, telling them about the various biological, physical and geological labs there. The tour ended in the institute’s wet lab with some hands-on activities.

Ms. Rouse said CCC worked with IMS on this because the college has been looking for resources to help the students in the C-STEP program.

“We knew we had a resource with IMS,” she said. “The students loved the presentation Dr. Fodrie made for us. He talked about how they would integrate some of the basic classes they’re taking here into work they would do at the lab.”

Dr. Fodrie said he agreed to take part in the program because he thinks the access provided by the C-STEP program speaks to the heart of the sentiment expressed by Mr. Kuralt about UNC.

“We certainly want IMS to be visible in the Carteret County community, and eastern North Carolina. For students hoping to enroll at UNC Chapel Hill, IMS can be a wonderful gateway to the real-world research that takes place at our university.”

Dr. Fodrie said the staff and faculty at IMS hope they can connect CCC students to UNC in a more tangible way before they even arrive at Chapel Hill. Ashley McKinney, IMS public information officer, said the staff approached Dr. Fodrie about taking part in the program because he has experience with presenting information and is a long-time coastal resident.

“He’s just a very engaging person who cares about the community,” Ms. McKinney said. She also said IMS intends to hold more C-STEP events in the future. While the number of

Dr. Joel Fodrie of the UNC Institute of Marine Sciences shows Carteret Community College students a crab Monday as part of a tour of IMS. The students are part of C-STEP, a UNC program for low- and middle-income community college students looking to enroll at UNC-Chapel Hill. (CCC photo)