

## Saul High School Visits Penn State

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Students from the junior class at Philadelphia's Walter Biddle Saul High School of Agricultural Science learned more about the diversity of career options in agriculture this month on a visit to Penn State's College of Agriculture. This is the third consecutive year Saul's junior class chose to visit the college for their class outing.

"This trip is important because it gives the students a chance to see what a college campus is like and the kinds of opportunities a college education can bring them," said Joe Weston, an agriculture teacher at Saul who accompanied the group. "The trip hopefully will encourage them to develop an interest in going to college."

Saul, the largest specialized agricultural high school in the United States, attracts urban students from neighborhoods across Philadelphia who are interested in

agriculture. To attend Saul, the students must pass entrance examinations and demonstrate ability in science and agriculture. In addition to English, math and science, they study subjects such as embryology, agronomy, and horticulture.

Last year, the College of Agriculture officially "adopted" Saul High School as part of the School District of Philadelphia's "Adopt-A-School" Program. Under the agreement, Penn State helps Saul students — many of whom come from inner-city neighborhoods — find careers and educational opportunities.

The 68 students arrived at Penn State at 11 a.m. and took guided walking tours of the campus. After the tour they gathered in an assembly room at the Hetzel Union Building for a luncheon program with university faculty and administrative staff.

Eric McCloud, Joe Schultze and Bob Torres, three Saul alumni

who are now enrolled in the College of Agriculture, explained why they decided to come to Penn State and discussed the challenges and opportunities offered by a college education.

After the luncheon, the students divided into groups to attend concurrent educational activities on topics ranging from veterinary science to horticulture. Some students toured the college's new computerized landscape planning facility. Dan Stearns, assistant professor of landscape contracting, demonstrated how landscapers can plan design projects directly on the computer. After scanning a photograph of a particular house, for example, landscape contractors can "place" trees, shrubs, and other features into the image, and view it from many different angles. This enables them to explore a variety of landscaping alternatives before breaking ground at a property.

Another group of students met

with experts in the department of horticulture. The faculty members explained how plants can be propagated through tissue culture, a biotechnological process in which whole plants are generated from single cells.

Dr. Stephanie Doores, associate professor of food science, showed her group how sensory evaluations — more commonly known as "taste tests" — are conducted in the lab, so that food scientists can

provide the best-tasting versions of new food products.

After the educational sessions, the students split into three groups for concurrent tours of the Deer Research Center, the Penn State Bookstore, and Beaver Stadium. The Deer Research Center intrigued many of the students, who usually don't see such wildlife around their Philadelphia neighborhoods.

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