

Youngsters looking for a unique summer experience this year might find it in the state's capitol.

The dates have been set for the 2019 Florida Indian Youth Program and Leadership Academy.

The two week program will run from July 13 through July 27 at Florida State University in Tallahassee. The deadline to submit application materials is May 30.

The youth program and leadership academy is free and open to Native American, Native Alaskan and Native Hawaiian youth tribal members and descendants from Florida and Georgia.

The youth portion, offered as a college preparatory program, is designed for those who are freshmen or sophomores in high school. The leadership academy is reserved for ambitious juniors, seniors or recent graduates (not older than 19).

Organizers said participants live in a residence hall on campus or nearby, and classes are held daily between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. During the program, students are required to be with a counselor and the group is accompanied by at least one officer of the FSU police department during off campus activities.

Those in the youth program can expect to learn more about STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), computer literacy and SAT/ACT preparation. During the evening and on the weekends, organizers host parties, trips to the mall and activities like bowling.

Leadership academy students are expected to gain leadership skills as well as independence during their time in the program. The students will have access to college site tours, be able to explore academic programs of study and also take part in fun activities on evenings and weekends.

Students will practice writing and learn more about tribal government issues, financial literacy and art.

An awards banquet takes place the end of the experience to recognize all attendees. There are also special awards given out to a few select students for outstanding achievements during the program.

The "intensive away from home educational experience" usually attracts about 50 to 60 participants each year. It is organized by the nonprofit Florida Governor's Council on Indian Affairs.

"The students participate in scholastic, cultural and social events and activities, all designed to increase the probability of high school graduation and inspire the students to higher academic achievement," said FGCIA organizers.

Students will rack up more than 70 hours of classroom activities.

The program was originally developed by the state of Florida to give Native American students the opportunity to spend two weeks in the state's capitol and be exposed to higher education and state government.

For more information and to apply, go to fgcia.org/youth-program.

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