Thirteen teens from Missouri, Kansas and Tennessee completed the 2011 Summers @ Mizzou Build-a-Business Camp on the MU campus, July 24-28. The program introduced youth ages 12-16 to numerous entrepreneurial aspects of the MU campus and Columbia business community over four days. Campers assessed their entrepreneurial traits, identified business startup opportunities, and took first steps toward planning a business they can start while in high school.

To get a taste of business enterprises on the MU campus, campers toured Buck’s Ice Cream, Tiger Garden, and the MU Bookstore. They were Generation Y marketing experts for a day, consulting with Hot Box Cookies of Columbia, brainstorming and presenting creative ideas and solutions to a local entrepreneur’s marketing challenges.

Joe Hayes (MU Student Unions) highlighted the MU Student Unions Entrepreneurial Program, which provides space for student-run businesses inside the MU Student Center. Campers also heard from Bob Newman (U.S. Small Business Administration) and Wayne McDaniel (MU Intellectual Property Management) on financing and protecting their brilliant ideas.

Following a tour of the MU Life Science Business Incubator by Quinten Messbarger (Missouri Innovation Center), campers participated in coaching sessions with business advisors from the U. S. Small Business Administration, Senior Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), Missouri Innovation Center, and MU Extension Community Economic & Entrepreneurial Development (ExCEED) program.

Over the course of the four days, youth fine-tuned their ideas and recorded action steps they can take to implement their startup. Startup ideas ranged from an ethnic family-owned restaurant, athletic clothing customization services, and musical instrument maintenance/repair, to beekeeping/honey, a better backpack, and comfortable shoes made of recycled plastic bottles. Youth were linked with MU Extension 4-H Youth Development and Business Development programs in their communities to continue learning as aspiring entrepreneurs.

On the final day of camp, youth toured the MU Trulaske School of Business and prepared individual presentations of their business ideas to a crowd of parents, family members, MU student-entrepreneurs and sponsors. Camp concluded with each young entrepreneur delivering an elevator pitch on his or her idea at the Summers @ Mizzou closing assembly.
Two youth who completed camp last year returned this summer to serve as youth counselors, assisting adult staff with leading the program and working with campers. Brandon Banks and LaKrista Souders used their 2010 camp experiences to launch or expand their businesses, and contributed peer-to-peer advice and encouragement to the 2011 campers. Banks, founder of Spot Light Stars, was also hired by Summers @ Mizzou to organize and direct over 120 campers in presenting an evening variety show during camp week.

Steve Henness, State 4-H Specialist with the 4-H Center for Youth Development, says “The program is beginning to do what we envisioned – helping young aspiring entrepreneurs get a start, but also connecting them with others and creating tangible opportunities for them to carry their ideas forward. It gives a picture of what can happen when campus and community get behind this up-and-coming generation of entrepreneurs.”

Youth also commented on their camp experiences, saying: “It met my expectations by educating me in how to start a business, and to get degrees and more info on business.” “I plan to use the structures and presentations that I created here.” “Working with business professionals was very helpful and one of my favorite parts of the camp.”

100% of youth said camp either helped inspire a new business idea or strengthened an idea they already had. 82% said they felt they would definitely become an entrepreneur after completing the program.

Build-a-Business Camp is one of seven camps offered through Summers @ Mizzou. Summers @ Mizzou engages teens in career-oriented tracks sponsored by MU departments and programs during the day, and in experiencing life on the Mizzou campus during the evening. Camp is sponsored by the University of Missouri Extension 4-H Center for Youth Development. Special thanks to the following 2011 sponsors, whose generous gifts cover camp expenses and provide partial scholarships for youth with financial need:

**Blue Ribbon sponsors:**
- Commerce Bank
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- MU Extension Community Economic & Entrepreneurial Development (ExCEED)
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