

Arnold and Mabel Beckman Center for Conservation Research Hosts Fullerton Union High School Students

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This past December, the Beckman Coulter Foundation was honored to fund a grant to the Zoological Society of San Diego to provide economically disadvantaged students from Fullerton Union High School with a science-based, exploratory field trip to the Arnold and Mabel Beckman Center for Conservation Research, housed at the San Diego Zoo's Wild Animal Park.

That field trip became a reality on May 20 for 65 very excited freshman and sophomore Biology students from Fullerton Union, accompanied by four teachers. "Many of these students have never been to a zoo before, let alone a research center," shared Biology teacher Jeff Oliva, who has also never been on a field trip with any of his classes during his 14-year teaching career.



The all-day program began with a visit to the Wild Animal Park, where students toured the wildlife sanctuary and learned about the scientific practices taking place to protect and breed rare and endangered species. Students then made their way to the Arnold and Mabel Beckman Center for Conservation Research, where they toured many of the center's labs and even got to see the infamous Frozen Zoo, which stores more than 8,700 individual cell samples representing more than 700 species and subspecies. During their tour, students met the center's Director of Genetics, Dr. Oliver A. Ryder, who just happens to be a Fullerton Union alumni. The tour also included an animal presentation that introduced students to a rare African owl and an anteater.

The real highlight of the day was the hands-on time spent in the Conservation Education Laboratory where students got to work with actual samples from six of the Wild Animal Park's African Elephants, measuring their progesterone levels. Students carefully handled samples using pipettes and applied their biology and chemistry knowledge to determine the reproductive status of the female samples. For an afternoon, students became scientists and were truly excited to be able to mirror the work being done by the actual researchers at the Arnold and Mabel Beckman Center for Conservation Research.

