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El Camino College Physics Student to Participate in Prestigious Summer Research Program at Kitt Peak National Observatory

El Camino College physics major Coty Spence has been selected to participate in a prestigious summer research program at the University of Arizona.

During this 10-week program, Spence will join a research project focused on the structure of the Milky Way galaxy by studying molecular clouds. He will be stationed at the Kitt Peak National Observatory in the Quinlan Mountains in the Arizona-Sonoran Desert, about 55 miles southwest of Tucson. This observatory site has the largest gathering of telescopes on the planet.

"I'm really looking forward to being away from city light pollution for two months so I can observe the stars on a nightly basis," said Spence, founder and current president of the ECC Astronomy & Astrophysics Club. He plans to transfer to the University of California at Santa Barbara this fall to continue his studies in physics.

Spence also received academic support through the El Camino College Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA) program. MESA provides academic enrichment in these fields. With tutoring and mentoring, extra study sessions, transfer counseling and study centers, MESA offers an environment that allows students to succeed in math and science and navigate the transfer system more easily.

"MESA gave me a way to study with other STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) majors," he added. "I am also notified of any internships or scholarships pertaining to my major."

Spence's research experience is organized through the California-Arizona Minority Partnership for Astronomy Research and Education (CAMPARE) program, a collaboration with California Polytechnic University, Pomona and the University of Arizona.

He will be provided with a stipend and dormitory housing as part of the program. Students from at least six different majors (physics, geology, biology, aerospace, computer and electrical engineering) have participated in CAMPARE. Projects students worked on last year include: "Formation Mechanisms for Dunes Observed on Titan" and "Optical Photometry of Recent Supernova Explosions."

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