In an effort to increase the number of opportunities for Native American students in science, the Chickasaw Nation partnered with the Sam Noble Museum and the Whitten-Newman Foundation to launch the Chickasaw Nation Native Explorers Program this fall.

Chickasaw students ages 6 to 18 will work with professional mentors from the Sam Noble Museum and engage in activities from diverse areas of study, including earth science, natural science and biomedical science.

“The Chickasaw Nation Division of Education continually looks for ways to enhance educational programs for Chickasaw and Native American youth,” says Lisa John, administrator of the Division of Education, Chickasaw Nation. “Native Explorers is an awesome program that introduces science in innovative, exciting and creative formats that challenge the creative thinking of youth. It seemed only natural to team with the Sam Noble Museum and Whitten-Newman ExplorOlogy® Program to begin this wonderful partnership.”

The Chickasaw Nation Native Explorers Program is designed to recruit, train and educate Chickasaw Nation students in the science field. The goal of the program is to increase the number of students that pursue degrees in the areas of science and medicine.

The idea came from the Native Explorers Foundation, created by Dr. Kent Smith and the Whitten-Newman Foundation in 2010. Smith, a research associate of the Vertebrate Paleontology Department at the Museum, developed a summer field-study experience for Native American college students. Working with scientists from the Sam Noble Museum and Oklahoma State University Center for Health Sciences, participants explored medicine, paleontology and native tradition and culture. The Chickasaw Nation decided to adapt the program for school age students with quarterly meetings and additional science events throughout the year.
“Providing programs that are creative, hands-on and educational is how we attract our Chickasaw students to think outside of the box.”

“Providing programs that are creative, hands-on and educational is how we attract our Chickasaw students to learn and think outside of the box,” says Lori Hamilton, director of Education Services Department, Chickasaw Nation. “Both the Native Explorers and ExplorOlogy® programs funded by the Whitten-Newman Foundation teach the world of science and medicine in unique ways that educate students in “real world” environments. Experts in these fields of study share their knowledge through instruction and activities conducive to their professions.”

Through partnerships with Native Explorers and the Whitten-Newman ExplorOlogy® Programs, Hamilton feels the Chickasaw youth will be given academic readiness and career awareness that will help prepare them for their future careers.

Going forward, the Sam Noble Museum will assist in making available educational resources to the Chickasaw Nation, including outreach and field-based experience for students through the Whitten-Newman ExplorOlogy® Program. For more information, visit www.nativeexplorers.org or http://www.chickasaweducationservices.com