



## United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.

---

**Nashville, TN Office:**

711 Stewarts Ferry Pike, Suite 100  
Nashville, TN 37214  
Phone: (615) 872-7900  
Fax: (615) 872-7417

**Washington, DC Office:**

400 North Capitol Street, Suite 585  
Washington, D.C., 20001  
Phone: (202) 624-3550  
Fax: (202) 393-5218

**Aspirnaut Students make research presentations at Vanderbilt University Medical Center  
Mississippi Band of Choctaw and Vanderbilt Sophomore Taloa Berg one of 18 students to  
present.**

**For immediate release**

**July 31, 2014**

**For more information contact**

**Brandon Stephens, Development Director**

**(615) 467-1560 or [bstephens@usetinc.org](mailto:bstephens@usetinc.org)**

(Nashville) – College students from across the south are making their final presentations for the research they have completed while participating in the Aspirnaut™ summer internship program at Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC) in Nashville. Similar to a program for high school students, students from Tennessee, Arkansas, Kentucky, and North Carolina colleges spent ten weeks at VUMC with scientists and researchers assisting and developing innovations in science, engineering, technology, and mathematics (STEM) on projects ranging from testing new treatments for diabetes to determining whether cells can be assisted with protection from proteins determined to break them down.

Mississippi Band of Choctaw citizen and Vanderbilt University rising sophomore Taloa Berg is one of 18 college students making a research presentation. This is the third year for Berg participating in the Aspirnaut™ program. In 2012, Berg was one of two high school students chosen to participate in the initial American Indian internship, which was sponsored by USET. Since her participation, Taloa has been accepted at Vanderbilt University and has served in leadership with Aspirnaut™ and with USET's Youth Leadership Council. Taloa spent the summer involved with research on the temporal and spatial localization of basement membrane proteins and modulators in mouse uterus during implantation. Taloa says to you and me the goal of this research project "Is to understand the basic functions and mechanisms of basement membranes. Without basement membranes and their functions we might not exist." Berg says she will probably declare her major as cellular and molecular biology.

The Aspirnaut™ program was created and is operated by VUMC's Billy Hudson, Ph.D. and Julie Hudson, M.D., M.A. Aspirnaut™ was developed to give high school and college students from rural areas with aptitudes for science, technology, engineering, and math opportunities to develop their skills, gain greater understanding of research, and experience some self-discovery. "This is your family. They (Aspirnaut™ students, VUMC Faculty, and scientists) are all interested in your growing. So when you go back you are little bit wiser about science and yourself. You are already successful. Today you are going to present your success," Billy Hudson told the Aspirnaut™ students.

USET has been a proud supporter and partner with the Aspirnaut™ program for three years. Almost a dozen students have participated in Aspirnaut™ during the past three

years. “The future of our Tribal Nations rests on the knowledge and strength of our younger generations. It is up to us to lift up and support them so that we may continue to carry on our culture, traditions, and legacy of our ancestors. This is why it is important for USET to be a partner with Vanderbilt University and the Aspirnaut™ program and continue to send our best and brightest to learn and understand STEM fields. It is in these fields we will make great advances for our Tribal Nations,” USET President Brian Patterson said.

*“Because there is strength in Unity”*

### Photo Captions



**Billy Hudson (at podium) addresses the Aspirnaut™ presenters and spectators.**



**Taloa Berg presents to the Aspirnaut™ audience. Taloa is a rising sophomore at Vanderbilt University and citizen of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw.**