FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ALABAMA LEARNING EXCHANGE HOSTS OVER 225 GIRLS IN STEM-RELATED EXPO

Montgomery, Ala. - For the eighth year, the program Girls Engaged in Math and Science University (GEMS-U) hosted over 225 female students from around the state at the GEMS-U Expo in March. The event themed “Thinking Like A...” was held in two locations, GulfQuest National Maritime Museum and the Birmingham Zoo. GEMS-U is an opportunity for Alabama’s K-12 female students to be actively engaged in STEM-related activities through formal and informal learning environments.

The girls in attendance have opportunities to collaborate with successful females in STEM-related careers, as well as showcase student-created projects developed through a collection of math and science lessons aligned to the Alabama College- and Career-Ready Standards.

The events featured keynote speakers from the Alabama Coastal Foundation and female zoo staff from Animal, Marketing, and Education Departments focusing on the role of STEM-related topics in their work. GEMS participants enjoyed educational programs that included STEM-inspired interactive investigations and explorations. The day concluded with the 2016 GEMS-U Exposition during which the girls showcased their projects created in groups at their respective schools. Participating schools included:

- Admiral Moorer Middle School, Eufaula City Schools
- Andalusia Junior High School, Andalusia City Schools
- Anniston Middle School, Anniston City Schools
- Bluff Park Elementary School, Hoover City Schools
- Brock’s Gap Intermediate School, Hoover City Schools
- Cedar Ridge Middle School, Decatur City Schools
- Chickasaw Elementary School, Chickasaw City Schools

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- Chickasaw High School, Chickasaw City Schools
- Clark-Shaw Magnet School, Mobile County Schools
- Cleveland High School, Blount County Schools
- Cobb/Constantine Elementary School, Anniston City Schools
- Collins-Rhodes School, Mobile County Schools
- Council Traditional School, Mobile County Schools
- Daphne High School, Baldwin County Schools
- Guntersville Middle School, Guntersville City Schools
- Handley Middle School, Roanoke City Schools
- Isabella High School, Chilton County Schools
- Kate Shepard Elementary School, Mobile County Schools
- Lakewood Elementary School, Phenix City Schools
- Rock Quarry Middle School, Tuscaloosa City Schools
- Rocky Ridge Elementary School, Hoover City Schools
- South Shades Crest Elementary School, Hoover City Schools
- STEM Academy @ LeCroy CTC, Chilton County Schools
- Vinemont High School, Cullman County Schools
- West Jasper Elementary School, Jasper City Schools

Of the GEMS event, Roger Torbert, VP of Education for the Birmingham Zoo, said, “I am very excited to partner with the Alabama State Department of Education in hosting the 2016 GEMS-U Expo at the Birmingham Zoo. As a STEM expert institution, one of our major goals is to offer young people access to a rich and engaging learning environment so that they can develop important skills and engagement in science, technology, engineering, and math. The Birmingham Zoo is working to offer STEM-rich learning opportunities that are high-quality, accessible, youth-centered, and connected so learners can deepen their skills and interests and tackle increasingly complex challenges over time.”

Ilka Porter, GulfQuest Education Director, said, “We are so excited to host GEMS-U! In the past, the Expo was only held in Birmingham, making it difficult for schools in south Alabama to participate. With our classroom programs aligned with STEM, and our interactive, science-based exhibits, GulfQuest is the perfect venue for girls to explore STEM-related careers.”

GEMS-U is an educational program offered by the Alabama State Department of Education. The GEMS-U program supports the national need to close the STEM gender gap, utilizing teaching strategies to encourage girls’ self-confidence and elevate interest in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and math. GEMS-U lesson activities and curriculum resources are available through the Alabama Learning Exchange (ALEX) Web portal for all educators, students, and parents at http://alex.state.al.us/.

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