Summary:
Before choosing the best college to attend, it is important for students to test the waters. Making a college visit and touring the campus can be pivotal in a student's decision to apply to school. Being on-campus allows students to decide the factors that matter in a college. College visits also can help in the admissions and application process. During the summer of 2012, the Elbert and Madison Counties Teens as Planners (TAP) took a week long road trip throughout Georgia to explore various colleges and allow students to gain a sense of the different types of colleges as well as the environments.

Situation:
According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 53.5% of low income high school graduates enrolled in college in 2011. Furthermore, they discovered through a study that at-risk youth who participated in college preparation activities increased the odds of their enrolling in postsecondary education. Gathering information about financial aid and talking to individuals about aid increased the odds of enrolling in any postsecondary education, while getting help with preparing for entrance exams and the college application process increased the odds of enrolling in a 4-year college. As opposed to generations of the past, high school graduates today are unable to obtain the number of high-paying jobs that were once available. The U.S. has been transformed from a manufacturing-based economy to an economy based on knowledge, and the importance of a college education today can be compared to that of a high school education forty years ago. It serves as the gateway to better options and more opportunity. When students began the Teens as Planners program as 9th graders, the majority of them didn't believe college was an attainable goal due to poor grades, lack of money, and undecided careers.

Response:
As rising 11th and 12th graders, TAP students were given the opportunity to rank the colleges that they would most like to visit. After compiling the results, a college tour was planned throughout the state of Georgia. A variety of schools were chosen based on campus size, location, cost and student life. Fifteen (15) students attended the TAP Summer College tour and visited seven (7) colleges. Participants experienced many different aspects of each college. They toured dorms, ate in campus dining establishments, visited classrooms and labs, met faculty members, and participated in community service. Students also participated in a follow up computer class where they researched available scholarships, registered on the Federal and Financial Student Aid (FAFSA) website, and ranked their top three college choices.

Impact:
- Efforts through Georgia Cooperative Extension made it possible for high school students to tour several colleges and universities across Georgia. Students were asked to reflect on their experience by engaging in three evaluation activities: (1) writing a postcard to a family member about their trip, (2) developing lyrics to a song about their trip, and (3) sharing a take-home message from the trip in the
form of a bumper sticker. After analyzing the data from the three evaluation activities, results indicated that the trip contributed to the students’ knowledge of the benefits of attending college (monetarily and career opportunities) and the diversity (demographically and geographically) that each of Georgia’s colleges and universities provides. Specifically, student responses indicated that they gained information about applying to college and learned about the variety of majors offered by each school. In the future, additional evaluations will be developed to determine what specifically about the college tour was most beneficial for the students and whether the tour contributed to their actual college attendance. Here is an example of each evaluation response:

- **Rap song**
  - I was thinkin while ridin through the state, about a college, at a steady rate...then I found Fort Valley, and now I have some faith
- **Bumper sticker**
  - College = success
- **Postcards**
  - Dear Savannah: Last week I toured Valdosta State University. I think it's perfect for you. It offers your major and will work with you with your class schedule and expenses.