

Encouraging Girls to Consider Computing Careers

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This panel discussion will concentrate on ways to encourage girls to consider careers in computing and information technology (IT). The following topics will be discussed:

- How can we encourage girls to pursue IT careers?
- How important is it that women in IT serve as role models for girls?
- As faculty, what can we do to encourage young women to pursue these careers?
- Where do girls learn about the stereotypes and barriers that prevent them from aiming for non-traditional careers?
- How can we influence girls and young women to give them the confidence they need to follow successful role models and to break through the “glass ceilings”?
- How do we influence boys and young men, so they don’t continue to learn or teach the stereotypes?

Panelists will respond to these questions from a variety of backgrounds and positions. The topic remains an important one. Only twenty-five percent of the Canadian IT workers are female (Bolan, 2000). Other indications appear to show this percentage, and the percentages of female IT workers in the United States and other parts of the world are shrinking. With high salaries, the IT field should attract females. Various studies over the years have emphasized that women are making up a smaller percentage of computer science graduates (Cole-Gomolski, 1998). “Women are mysteriously absenting themselves from computer science courses in high school and college.” (DiDo, 1996)

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