Committed to Community Logo

Receives Recognition

Colleges and universities across the country are developing enrichment programs designed to address the lack of diversity—both women and minorities—in the field of science, technology, engineering, and math, also known as STEM.

This summer, 13 area high-school girls came to campus to participate in a new program designed to boost the percentage of women in the next generation of engineers and scientists.

“Women are an underrepresented group in science today,” says Kelly Hart, director of the program called GETSET! (Girls Exploring Technology, Science, and Engineering for Tomorrow). “We hope to encourage the girls to pursue careers in these male-dominated areas.” Hart also is a chemistry teacher at University High School of Science and Engineering (UHSSE) and a chemical engineer.

Through hands-on experiments and activities in classes taught by University professors, the young women explored topics such as transportation, leadership, computer programming, technical writing, architecture, and entrepreneurship. The biomechanics class dissected chicken legs to identify ligaments, tendons, and muscles.

GETSET! is a collaboration between CETA and UHSSE. It is supported in part by grants from the Women’s Education and Leadership Fund, Northeast Utilities, AAUW (formerly known as the American Association of University Women), and other sponsors.

Fourth Jackie McLean Fellow Comes to Campus

Now in its third year, the Jackie McLean fellowship is designed to increase faculty diversity on campus. The fellowship is open to degree candidates who have completed all course work toward a doctoral degree or a master’s in a field in which the master’s is the terminal degree.

Laura Hymson, a PhD candidate in American culture at the University of Michigan, has joined the faculty at the University of Hartford for the 2010–11 academic year as a Jackie McLean Fellow.

Hymson teaches in the history departments in the College of Arts and Sciences and Hillyer College while working to finish her dissertation. She holds a bachelor’s in American studies from Wesleyan University in Middletown, Conn., and a master’s in gender and cultural studies from Simmons College in Boston, Mass. Her scholarship examines the intersection phenomenon of corporate globalization and culture, and she expects to complete her dissertation this fall.

Karen Tejada, the 2008–09 Jackie McLean Fellow, has joined the Hillyer College faculty as an assistant professor of sociology.

Meredith Nickie, a 2009–10 Jackie McLean Fellow in sculpture, returned to New York City to continue her studio art practice. She has mounted two solo exhibitions and participated in other shows as well as the Whitney Museum of American Art’s annual Art Party and Auction this past June.

Nadia Brown, a 2009–10 Jackie McLean Fellow in politics and government, finished her dissertation during the year, completing her PhD in political science at Rutgers University. Brown has joined the faculty of Saint Louis University in midtown St. Louis, Mo.

The fellowship is named for the late Jackie McLean, a world-renowned alto saxophonist, educator, composer, and community activist who served on the faculty at the University of Hartford for 36 years.

Get Ready!
Get Set! Go!

IMPROVING DIVERSITY IN STEM CAREERS

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The students also listened to inspiring stories from women who have carved out successful careers in STEM fields, including Glennis Orloff, president/CEO of Samara Innovations, which is developing engineered garments to enhance the performance of female athletes; Mary Ann Wasil Nilan, executive director and founder of the Get in Touch Foundation, which promotes breast cancer awareness among women of all ages; and Penny Kelly, program educator at the Connecticut Science Center. Lou Manzione, dean of the College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture (CETA), also spoke to the group.

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Editor’s note: In a related story, Abby Ilumoka-Nwabuzor, professor of electrical and computer engineering in CETA, recently received an $83,000 research grant from the National Science Foundation to fund a new research project called Development of Pedagogical Insights and Strategies to Overcome Barriers to Women and Minorities in STEM.
Bill Clinton Attends Rally on Campus

Students had the rare opportunity to get close to a former U.S. president when Bill Clinton spoke at the Reich Family Pavilion in October. Clinton was on campus to attend a campaign rally sponsored by the state Democratic Party.

Clinton included several direct messages to students in his speech. He talked about a new student loan law that gives money directly to universities to lend, saving students an estimated $1,300 for every $10,000 they have to repay. The law also sets aside $40 billion to make sure Pell Grants, work-study funds, and tax deductions for tuition keep up with inflation for a decade.

“And from now on,” Clinton explained, “every student in America with a student loan will be able to pay that loan back as a small fixed percent of their income for up to 20 years, and never more than 10 percent.”

Some students waited in line for two hours but said it was worth it to hear Clinton speak. Ilana Weinberger, a fourth-year sociology major who was near the front of the line, said she hoped the event encouraged her classmates to form political opinions.

Members of the women’s basketball team left a message for the former president on a white board in the Sports Center: “Dear Mr. Clinton, We hope you enjoy your day in the Reich Family Pavilion. Please come back to watch the Lady Hawks basketball team in action!” Clinton responded, “Look forward to it! Bill Clinton, 10-31-10.”

Successful Democratic candidates Dan Malloy (governor), Nancy Wyman (lieutenant governor), and Richard Blumenthal (U.S. senator) also spoke at the rally.

$250,000 Bank of America Grant

“As the track record of success at Hillyer College has grown over the years, so too has their enrollment, which underscores the importance of this new space,” Bank of America Connecticut President Kevin Cunningham said in presenting a $250,000 grant to the University in October.

The grant will help fund a two-story, 10,000-square-foot addition to Hillyer Hall, which will be named the Shaw Center in recognition of a significant leadership gift from John (Jay) Shaw ’74 and his wife, Debi. University of Hartford President Walter Harrison thanked Cunningham, saying, “We proudly accept this grant and Bank of America’s recognition of our institution as an economic driver creating a culture of growth. We truly appreciate this contribution to the expansion of space for Hillyer College.”

University, Saint Francis Hospital Establish Formal Affiliation

Officials from the University of Hartford and Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center in Hartford signed an affiliation agreement on June 24 that provides a framework for developing joint research and educational programs.

Under the agreement, Saint Francis will become the main clinical partner for the University in a wide range of programs in the College of Education, Nursing and Health Professions (ENHP) and the College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture (CETA). The affiliation agreement will facilitate clinical placements for University of Hartford students at Saint Francis; advanced educational opportunities for Saint Francis staff at the University; and innovative, long-term research initiatives and collaborations.

University of Hartford President Walter Harrison and Saint Francis President and Chief Executive Officer Christopher M. Dadlez signed the agreement during a brief ceremony in the rotunda at the hospital’s main entrance. The ceremony was attended by members of the University of Hartford and Saint Francis communities, including ENHP Dean Ralph Mueller and CETA Dean Lou Manzione.
When Dan Pious ’07 (Barney) and his brother, Jordan, crossed the finish line last May on CBS’s The Amazing Race, he became the latest University of Hartford alumnus to achieve success in the world of reality television.

Pious and his brother shared a prize of $1 million after finishing first on the show, in which multiple teams of two follow clues in a race around the world. Not a fan of traveling, Pious says he went on the show because it was his brother Jordan’s dream, and it turned out to be “an incredible experience.”

After the race, the brothers enjoyed a burst of celebrity that included several national television appearances. Dan Pious, a die-hard sports fan, recently moved to Boston, Mass., in hopes of going to work for one of the city’s legendary sports teams.

Veteran reality TV producer David Pritikin ’93 (A&S) is one of the driving forces behind a new reality show on TLC, Sarah Palin’s Alaska. Pritikin served as supervising producer for the documentary series about the state of Alaska as seen through the eyes of former governor Sarah Palin and her family.

A few years after graduation, Pritikin moved to Los Angeles, Calif., and became associate producer on the very first season of Survivor in 2000, before anyone knew that the show would become a cultural phenomenon. Ultimately, Pritikin became the supervising producer of Survivor and stayed on for eight years.

Since then, Pritikin has produced several other reality shows, including MTV’s 50 Cent: Money and the Power, TLC’s Tailgate Takedown (a tailgate cooking competition), and ABC’s Dating in the Dark.

The reality show Cake Boss on TLC follows cake artist Buddy Valastro and his staff at Carlo’s City Hall Bake Shop in Hoboken, N.J. Toni Walton ’07 (HAS) was a top cake decorator at the bakeshop during the first two seasons of the show.

When a friend asked Walton, an avid cook and baker, to make a wedding cake, she discovered a new medium for her art. "At that point I knew I absolutely loved making cakes," Walton says. "It’s like art but in cake form!"

One day, Walton found herself in Hoboken passing Carlo’s City Hall Bake Shop. The cakes in the window caught her eye, so she walked in and showed Valastro a picture of one of the cakes she had made, did a trial run at the shop, and was hired. Two weeks later, Cake Boss began filming. Today, Walton is head decorator at a Los Angeles bakery called Hotcakes Bakes. Ultimately, she hopes to open her own bakeshop.

On the 2008 season of NBC’s America’s Got Talent, the Taubl family made it to the show’s top 20, out of hundreds of thousands who auditioned, and became an audience favorite. The family has many connections to The Hartt School—daughter Gretchen Taubl is a 2006 graduate of Hartt; and two of her sisters, Emily and Annabelle, were Hartt students at the time of the show.

Today, the Taubs continue to perform, and they are involved in a project to replace musical instruments that were lost in the Haiti earthquake.

Artist and Emmy-winning director Joe Dea ’76 (HAS) has had a long and prolific career in video and television, including pioneering work in the early days of MTV and music videos. Dea’s more recent work has included a number of reality television projects. He directed the pilot and 48 episodes of the TLC program A Wedding Story, one of the longest-running series on cable television, which follows couples preparing for their nuptials. He also directed ESPN’s Knight School, a documentary series about 16 Texas Tech students trying to make it onto the basketball team coached by the controversial Bobby Knight.