Center for Teaching and Learning
Newsletter

CTL April Newsletter

The CTL Newsletter is distributed electronically every month during the academic year.

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Dates to Note!!

**Monday, April 29**
Interdisciplinary Research Roundtable: Undergraduate Research
12:15 to 1:40 p.m.
Bent Hall 277A*

**Monday, April 29**
Expanded Horizons on the Global South: the Pedagogy and Practice of Global Service-Learning
1:50 to 3:15 p.m.
Bent Hall 277A*

**Monday, May 20**
Faculty Writing Retreat
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
IWS, Library 150

*Queens Campus

TO REGISTER VISIT:
www.stjohns.edu/ctl.
CAREER CORNER

The Value of Internships: From the Student’s Perspective

Roseann Sorensen (Career Services, sorenser@stjohns.edu)

Employers value the practical experience that internships provide to students. According to data released by the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, a significant percentage of employers prefer students with work experiences that complement their college credentials compared to students with no experience and a high GPA (December 2012). However, what value do internships have for the students who pursue them? Are there benefits to a student’s academic and professional development? Recently, I sat down with several students who completed internships related to their major. I asked their feedback on what their internship experience was like and their reaction to doing an internship. Here is what they had to say.

Alexa is a Speech Pathology junior who interned at Eden II school. The focus of this organization is to address the needs of children and adults with autism. During her internship, Alexa gained experience working with children who have autism and observed the different ABA therapy styles that licensed Speech Therapists use to address speech disorders. This experience helped bring to life the different concepts that she is studying. According to Alexa, “an internship opens up everything you learn about in the classroom.” It also helped her to see how speech pathology materials are implemented in an actual therapy session. One of the things that stood out to Alexa was that she had not considered helping children who have autism before. Her internship experience opened up new possibilities that she can pursue in the future. She also found that pursuing an internship for academic credit allowed her to learn about the internship experiences of other students under the supervision of their Speech Pathology professor. These sessions helped her to gain a further understanding about the relationship between her internship and what she is learning in the classroom. As Alexa said, “Doing the internship helped put what I learned into action and gave me a clearer idea of where I can apply my degree.”

Michael’s passion for television and film led him to pursue this as his major at St. John’s. He has valued his coursework. However he realized that practical experience in a TV or Film studio would be an important next step in his educational and professional development. He was very fortunate to obtain an internship at Steiner Studios in Brooklyn where he was involved with TV and film production for companies such as HBO and Warner Films. As an intern, Michael worked in two major departments – Stage Management and Lighting. He worked alongside lighting professionals and helped with the daily details and technical materials needed by the 100+ production staff. Often he was given responsibility for $50,000 worth of equipment needed by the production crew. He also learned how integrating proper lighting is an important part of making a film whether you become a director or work on a production crew. One of the most important things that Michael gained from his internship was that it introduced him to the business side of film which he never considered before. Like many communication students, he often thought about pursuing a career in production. “I thought I only wanted the creative side, but I now realize that the business side is another aspect to consider.” This internship provided him with hands-on experience in contracts and the business issues that need to be addressed before a film can
start rolling. Michael found that a valuable aspect of doing the internship was that “It helped open up new opportunities and ideas of what I would enjoy doing.”

What stood out to Christine about her internship was that it provided her with the opportunity to begin building relationships with other professionals in the field of psychology. As a Psychology senior, she often thought to herself “what can I do with a major in Psychology?” She had heard about different career fields during class discussions, but there seemed to be so many options. How would she know the best choice for her? When she selected Psychology as a major, she always knew that she wanted to help people, but in what way? When she heard about an internship at the JCC of Staten Island, working with children, Christine thought this could be a good way to find out whether she would want to work with this population in the future. “Everyone else seems to know what they want to do. The internship gave me a better idea about possible careers that are available to me.” The internship not only provided her with hands-on experience in her major, it also expanded the opportunity to interact with different professionals. “For me, the value of an internship is the understanding that you gain and the relationships you build that can be helpful in the future.” She had never thought of becoming a social worker before the internship. However, many of the professionals she worked with had backgrounds in this area. These interactions helped her to begin narrowing down her choice of a career and graduate school. In fact, it resulted in her applying for and getting accepted to a Masters in Social Work graduate program.

It is evident from the feedback of our students that internships are valuable to their academic and professional growth. Just as faculty are an integral part of a student’s academic development, they also play an important role in the internship process. For example, during academic advisement, faculty advisors often discuss with students how they can incorporate an internship when registering for their courses. Many faculty also encourage students to participate in internships by sharing examples of those who have benefitted from completing internships. Students are often referred to the Career Services office to identify internships that match their academic and career interests. CareerLink, St. John’s online job posting system, is one way students can find appropriate internships among its hundreds of postings. The Career Services staff also regularly advises students on how to develop an effective resume when applying for an internship. These are some of the ways in which the St. John’s community supports students in the pursuit of internships to further their academic and career goals.

Global Engagement at St. John's
St. John's continues to enrich the global resources available to students and faculty. There are a number of Centers and programs that might be of interest to you. Here are links to their websites:

- Center for Global Development
- Global Institute for Taxation
- Global Language and Culture Center
- Globe Microloan Program
- The Language Connection
Dr. Maura C. Flannery (Computer Science, Mathematics and Science, flannerm@stjohns.edu) was invited to present a paper, "The Herbarium as Muse," in the symposium, Artful Science, at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Boston (February 2013).

Dr. Emese Ivan (Sports Management, ivane@stjohns.edu) presented a paper, "Hungarian Sport Community in Transition: Is There a Role for Athletes in Social Change?" at a national conference at the Muhammad Ali Center, Louisville, KY; and published the article, "Teaching Sport Economics through Technology," in the International Journal of Economic Sciences (2013).

Dr. Richard Stalter (Biological Sciences, staller@stjohns.edu) presented the paper, "The Vascular Flora of Brookhaven National Laboratory, Long Island, New York," at the annual meeting of the South Carolina Academy of Science at the University of South Carolina Aiken (April 2013).

Dr. Charles Wankel (Management, wankelc@stjohns.edu) co-authored the books Increasing Student Engagement and Retention using Classroom Technologies: Classroom Response Systems and Mediated Discourse Technologies and Increasing Student Engagement and Retention in e-Learning Environments: Web 2.0 and Blended Learning Technologies (Emerald Group Publishing, 2013).

If you would like to send an entry to “Faculty News,” the deadline for the May issue is April 29. We prefer that you email the information to CTL@stjohns.edu. Please have your entries follow the style presented in “Faculty News.”

Faculty Writing Retreat

Location: Institute for Writing Studies, Library Room 150, Queens Campus
Date: Monday, May 20, 2013 from 10 a.m. to 4
REGISTER NOW:

The Faculty Writing Retreat offers you the opportunity to commit to a day of writing surrounded by your colleagues who will have made the same commitment as you. Published research – and our own experience from previous St. John’s Faculty Writing Initiative writing retreats we’ve held – tells us the positive energy of being around faculty peers who are also writing (and struggling to write) helps faculty get substantial work done, even in one day.

As to the schedule for the retreat, you will arrive and begin writing. We are certain there will be much writing advice to be shared during lunch, which will be served at 12:30pm. We hope you will be able to join us. Please remember that participation is limited; to register go to www.stjohn.edu/ctl. If you have any questions, email Anne Geller (gellera@stjohns.edu) or Maura Flannery (flannerm@stjohns.edu).

If you would like to learn more about writing retreats or you are interested in research about faculty writing productivity, go to the CTL Forum Writing Page at http://stjohns.campusguides.com/aecent.php?pid=71651&sid=589816.

If you have any questions please contact the CTL at CTL@stjohns.edu.
CTL Fellows on Research in Teaching and Technology
On April 18, the 2011-2013 CTL Fellows made presentations on their projects which deal with integrating technology into their teaching. Over the two years of their fellowship, they explored active learning strategies and technologies that you might also find useful in your teaching. Short descriptions of their projects follow:

The Current Practice of Pay-Per-View (PPV) as an Alternative to Subscription for E-Journals in American Academic Libraries
Tian Xiao Zhang (University Libraries, zhangt@stjohns.edu)

In recent years, unbundling the “big deal” was considered as a cost efficient way to solve the serials crisis, and libraries began using Pay-Per-View (PPV), the “little deal,” to keep the same level of accessibility to e-resources. The utilization of PPV for e-articles as an alternative to E-journal subscription has become a great challenge to both journal providers and academic libraries. Through our own experience of using PPV and case studies of other academic libraries, we realized that using PPV involves not only the librarians’ efforts, it also needs the full support of the journal providers. This presentation provided case studies and explored the new issues and consequences of the use of mediated and unmediated PPV models; and finally, suggested improvements for publishers that can help libraries implement PPV.

Wikipedia and American Women Writers: From Collaborative Intelligence to Cognitive Surplus
Jennifer Travis (St. John’s College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, travisj@stjohns.edu)

Despite academic admonitions, Wikipedia continues to be one of the most trafficked websites, and studies show that students regularly use Wikipedia, often at the start of an assignment. In my Nineteenth-Century American Women Writers course, all my students admitted to using Wikipedia frequently, yet not one of them had ever edited a Wikipedia page. My presentation described how these same students transformed from consumers to producers of the site and used discipline-specific research techniques to develop the Wikipedia presence of some of the writers we were studying. The course encouraged students to cultivate their collaborative skills, to promote more effective use of peer comments, and to guide students toward more nuanced understandings of the use of secondary criticism and the importance of documentation. By participating in web-based knowledge creation and drawing on their collaborative learning in an upper level literature course, they also were dipping their toes in the burgeoning field known as digital humanities.

Self-help Aides for Learning the Software Tools in the Financial Information Lab
John Neumann (The Peter J. Tobin College of Business, nuemannj@stjohns.edu)

The Financial Information Lab offers two state-of-the-art financial database and software systems — FactSet and Bloomberg — with robust analytical tools and applications that can be used to enhance business course offerings and add to the experiential learning objectives of the Tobin College of Business. This CTL Fellows project developed learning aides that students can use to help them become familiar with the tools’ functionality and see how to navigate between screens and/or reports within each system to perform basic functions or data queries.

AppInventor and Mobile Phone Apps: Students as Technology Creators
Bonnie MacKellar, College of Professional Studies, mackellb@stjohns.edu

AppInventor for Android is a new programming environment that allows users who have no programming background to create mobile applications that use social networking, location awareness, and other mobile services. One of the innovations of AppInventor is that it enables students to learn computational thinking, a key skill in computer science and informatics, in a highly visual and engaging way while they are creating real, functioning mobile applications.
In my Teaching with Technology Fellows project, I developed a Healthcare Informatics (HCI) course in which HCI students with little or no programming background built healthcare related mobile applications. This course focuses on data and information in the healthcare setting, the role of electronic applications in healthcare, and the systems lifecycle. We used mobile applications as a means of discussing these topics, and added material on building applications in AppInventor, case studies of mobile applications in healthcare, and material on design of user interfaces for healthcare. The course was designed based on the principles of studio-based learning, with students completing and sharing projects of their own choosing.

In this presentation, I discussed my experience with this augmented course, describing the rationale, the process of introducing the new material, the student-designed applications, and the results from the course evaluation. I also discussed the way I expanded the project this semester. The students developed applications aimed at pharmacists, after a design meeting with pharmacy students during which they used the CARD (Collaborative Analysis of Requirements and Design) methodology to elicit pharmacy workflows. I worked with Maria Leibfried, also a Teaching with Technology Fellow, in planning and facilitating this meeting, demonstrating the way in which this program can lead to greater synergies among the participants.

Blackboard’s ‘Collaborate:’ An Interactive Tool for Maximizing Educational Engagement

Patrick Flanagan (St. John’s College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, flanagap@stjohns.edu)

The Blackboard platform that is used by educational institutions for distance learning and hybrid courses has proven to be a valuable venue for learning engagement. Despite increased market competition, Blackboard still remains the preferred learning management system (LMS) at colleges and universities across the United States. Data from Campus Computing Survey (www.campuscomputing.net) 2012 reports that the use of Blackboard, including its Angel and WebCT versions, has fallen from to 44.8% in 2012 from 57.1% and 71% in 2010. A percentage of institutions of higher learning have preferred to contract with other alternative course management systems such as, Desire2Learn (11.1%), while other colleges have preferred using open-source programs such as Moodle (20.1%), Sakai (6.1%), or Canvas by Infrastructure (4.6%). In the end, some individual teachers forgo institutional options and choose to create their own LMS using platforms like Google Sites (https://sites.google.com/), Piazza (https://piazza.com/), Campus Guides (stjohns.campusguides.com/), and even Second Life (www.secondlife.com).

Reasons why some institutions move to other LMSs involve technological capabilities including intuitive nature of the platform, ease of interaction, and ability to incorporate Web 2.0. Additionally, in an era of fiscal constraint for higher education, one cannot ignore the financial factor. A year’s lease for Blackboard for an institution the size of St. John’s can run as high as 160K. Some teachers maximize use of Blackboard keeping everything for their classes centralized. Other instructors find the Blackboard system does not offer the tools they need to teach their classes and turn to aforementioned platforms. However, some may choose to migrate to other platforms without mining the rich cache of resources available.

For the most part, teachers and students use Blackboard Learn for the distance learning courses here at St. John’s University. The Learn platform provides a decent platform for a learning community of faculty and students to engage each other in the pursuit of knowledge and insight. More recently, Blackboard created “Collaborate.” Collaborate is Blackboard’s newest development in its learning management system. It incorporates many of the rich dynamics of the familiar software programs Elluminate and Wimba recently purchased by Blackboard.

Over the course of my time as a Fellow in the Center for Teaching and Learning, I have been working to master Blackboard’s Collaborate system. Unlike Learn, Collaborate is used primarily for synchronous instruction. Collaborate is a dynamic platform that offers space for MS PowerPoint slides, live video feed, live voice threading, and instant messaging. It provides a venue for connecting with students across dis-
tances or because of other challenges (a storm, for example). After teaching a lesson, the class can be archived for further review or future use. This presentation offered a demonstration of Blackboard’s Collaborate.

A Multimedia, Multi-platform Syllabus for Student Engagement

Rodger M. Casselman (The Peter J. Tobin College of Business, casselmr@stjohns.edu)

Student engagement can be described in a variety of ways. It can be seen as an effort to make material relevant to students’ lives, to create psychological flow, as affective commitment, intrinsic motivation or absorption in a task, and has been examined at the task, course, degree or institutional levels. In this project, I viewed student engagement as having two principal components: an interest in engaging with class materials and ease of access to class materials. I posit that production value is a key component of interest. As a result, I focused on producing a multimedia syllabus which is accessible in a multi-platform computing environment. That is, I created the syllabus as an introductory application with multimedia aspects in order to provide a strong first impression of the course material and pique the student’s interest in engaging with it. I conceptualized the syllabus as a virtual curator of the course materials. I also produced the application with a view to it being accessed from multiple hardware platforms including mobile devices. In the sample syllabus, the application is designed to operate on a Microsoft Windows laptop, an iPad and an iPhone. In addition, the syllabus has been designed to work as either an interactive PDF or a tablet application (DPS app). The goal of this project was to act as a test of incorporating different multimedia components and demonstrating a more visually oriented syllabus on multiple platforms.

Digital Writing Tools

Anne Ellen Geller (St. John’s College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, gellera@stjohns.edu) and Maura C. Flannery (College of Professional Studies, flannerm@stjohns.edu)

As part of the Faculty Writing Initiative, a joint project of WAC (Writing Across the Curriculum) and the CTL, we recently hosted a workshop dealing with online tools to make writing easier and more organized. Of course, there are dozens of such products available on the web; our choices were based either on personal experience or the recommendation of fellow writers.

If you are looking for an easy way to share files with others and to have coauthors work on a document, then Google docs might be the answer. It’s free and a great way to store documents in the cloud so they are accessible everywhere. You can also use Dropbox in similar ways, and you can set it up so that your files are automatically saved to it. If you dream of having a secretary to whom you can give dictation, the voice recognition software called Dragon might be the answer. For taking notes—and most importantly—keeping track of them, Evernote is wonderful, especially because everything is stored in the cloud. Also, it will clip information from websites, store images and video files—and generally, keep you organized. Draft is another big help in this line, especially if you are getting tangled up in multiple drafts of one manuscript. And when you are putting your manuscript together into publishable form, you might want to consider Scrivener which is used by book authors.

There are several powerful citation managers, all of which have some capability for sharing sources with others. RefWorks is available free to all STJ faculty and students through the University Libraries webpage. It allows you to store not only citations but notes on references as well. There is an add-on for MS Word that enables you to add citations as you type a manuscript and then have a bibliography created in the format you desire, such as MLA or APA. Zotero and Mendeley are available for free on the web and have many of the same features as RefWorks. Zotero is easy to use, Mendeley has interesting social networking features, and as one librarian describes it, Refworks is the “Cadillac” of citation managers. If you are looking for more tech tools, ProfHacker is a valuable resource.
Vincentian Mission: Opportunity and Responsibility No. XLIV
Faculty Conversations on Catholic Social Thought in Higher Education
Mary Ann Dantuono, J.D., (Associate Director, Vincentian Center for Church and Society, dantuono@stjohns.edu)

In this series, Vincentian Center Research Fellows from across the University and Center Administrators describe events and experiences which assist faculty to understand and integrate elements of Catholic Social Thought (CST) into their academic work. In this issue, Mary Ann Dantuono, J.D., Associate Director of the Vincentian Center, describes faculty development programs which present and demonstrate the Vincentian Tradition and Catholic Social Thought through faculty study and conversation. As a member of the host organization and a presenter in these programs over the past 12 years, she presents an historical review of key documents as well as a summation of the responses of faculty to these opportunities.

The Vincentian Center for Church and Society was established in 1994 as a way to promote collaboration between the University and the Church and to assist the University in its efforts to integrate Catholic Social Thought (CST) across the curriculum. This visionary move by the Board of Directors and the President of St. John’s evolved from reflections on Ex Corde Ecclesiae, the apostolic constitution of Pope John Paul II on the role of the Catholic University in the Church. These sharings predated a call to action by the United States Catholic Bishops who in 1998, issued “Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions” to clarify and proclaim the essential place of the social teaching of the Church in the Catholic faith and in Catholic education. The goal of integrating CST into both curricula and research has been achieved at St. John’s in a variety of ways from the continued requirement of ethics for all students, to the Vincentian Research Fellows who design research and develop special social justice presentations for their colleagues across the University. These have been shared via this publication over the years and form the basis for two seminars open to new and senior faculty.

Catholic Social Thought is a moral and ethical framework that can be used to assist students in the critical analysis of the major issues of our time, such as poverty, capital punishment, widening gaps between the rich and the poor, migration, access to education, and care of the environment. Such explorations prepare students to be good citizens taking on social responsibilities and advocating for persons whose essential needs are not being met by existing structures and systems. Even more importantly from the long-term perspective, knowledge of CST enables students to view the practices and policies of their chosen professions from a vantage point of values and ethical norms that may challenge the status quo.

The Vincentian Center has collaborated with the deans and the faculty in a range of ways to assist with the integration of CST at St. John’s University and beyond. This work has been intentional and consistent in programming and projects over the years. A major event in this effort is the Biennial Poverty Conference which has been sponsored by the Center since 1999 and is the work of the Vincentian Research Fellows. The Center highlights current issues of CST and integrates them into forums, colloquia, seminars, interest groups and other programs which attract faculty from across the University. The Faculty Experts who serve the Holy See Mission to the United Nations and the CRS-Global Solidarity Scholars have the enviable position of seeing how CST relates to the global. Other justice programs annually presented by the Fellows have become a critical component in informing the University of universal social issues such as hunger, AIDS, CST in Business and Global Development.

In addition, each year the Center conducts two seminars for faculty. The goal of these four-hour seminars is to introduce the rich history of the Vincentian tradition and its influence on the organizational culture and academic mission of St. John’s University. The Fall Seminar, “Vincentian Mission Orientation for Faculty” is offered to “new” faculty and discusses how this “Vincentian identity” can advance curricular coherence and student development within the University. It focuses on the Vincentian component of the Mission statement and traces how this heritage has provided a special culture at St. John’s. The session
also includes a very practical component in which a panel of Vincentian Research Fellows offer examples and advice as to how they have integrated the Vincentian values into their curricula, methodologies, service and research. This panel, plus the introductory presentations on “Vincent as Educator,” allow the “new” faculty to explore with more experienced St. John’s faculty the relevance of the Vincentian Mission to their own teaching and research.

The Center also offers a spring seminar on “Faculty Conversations on Catholic Social Thought and Higher Education.” This seminar is open to all faculty and explores the sources and foundation of Catholic Social Thought and the relevance of CST to a Vincentian University curriculum and pedagogy. The first part of the seminar is offered by St. John’s faculty on the fundamental principles of Catholic Social thought such as “The Dignity of the Human Person and the Common Good” and “Solidarity and the Preferential Option for the Poor.” Then to provide the practical aspects of implementation, again a panel of Vincentian Research Fellows discuss their experiences of applying the CST values and principles to their disciplines and research. This lively discussion enables the participants to probe the presenters’ experience as a means of deepening both their knowledge and their methods. Whether novices or experienced faculty, whether well versed in CST or totally unfamiliar with the topic, faculty participants rate the seminar as “very good” or “excellent,” noting that the “enlightening” seminar gives the participant “a better understanding of CST and its relevance across a great many disciplines.”

Vincent de Paul stated “Love is inventive unto infinity.” At these seminars, creative “intellectual charity” is expressed in amazing ways. After hearing of the many ways the Vincentian Research Fellows have applied this “moral framework,” faculty see new possibilities in the topics they assign for students’ research, writing assignments, and service learning, as well as for their own research and presentations. The faculty who attend are “inspired” and “challenged” to learn more about Catholic Social Thought and to consider how they might use this “valuable tool” which is gaining more and more notice on the world’s stage.

Fifteen years ago the US Catholic Bishops issued a call to action for educators, “Sharing CST,” in which they stated: “The test for our Church is not simply have we “kept the faith,” but have we “shared the faith.” This is especially appropriate as we mark this year of Faith within the Catholic Church. One of the most frequent comments presented on the evaluations of these two programs is the universal relevance of Vincent de Paul’s concern for the poor and the congruence between these CST principles and the professors’ own personal commitment to justice and peace. At our very diverse St. John’s, faculty share their own academic efforts and demonstrate that professors of all faiths benefit from conversations with their colleagues on the overall principles of Catholic Social Thought. In doing so, they “bring good news, liberty, and new sight to a society and world in desperate need of God’s justice and peace.”

Women’s History Month: Women Inspiring Innovation through Imagination

Marie Nitopi (IRB and Women in Science Coordinator, Office of Grants and Sponsored Research
nitopim@stjohns.edu)

March was Women’s History Month and this year’s national theme was Women Inspiring Innovation through Imagination. Programs were organized throughout the country highlighting and honoring women who have used their imagination, intelligence and sense of wonder to make exceptional contributions to the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). At St. John’s University, the Office of Multicultural Affairs and in particular, the Women’s History Month Planning Committee organized numerous events to celebrate women and their accomplishments, as well as to educate students, faculty and administrators about experiences in the STEM majors and careers.
Remember:
The best places to look for faculty-related information are the CTL Webpage and the CTL Teaching and Learning Forum.

Faculty News:
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It is widely known that in order for the United States to be competitive in the global economy, the recruitment and retention of students into the STEM pipeline is critical. Unfortunately, despite many advances, women still remain largely underrepresented in many STEM professions and academic programs. This disparity is due to a variety of factors, and there are many solutions that can correct this imbalance.

According to a report by the American Association of University Women, there are many practical ideas to help girls and women reach their potential in STEM. Exposing girls to successful female role models can help overcome negative stereotypes. Additionally, supporting women in STEM majors through student/faculty engagement, seminars, social events and mentoring can close the STEM gender gap.

The Women in Science Society in collaboration with University Career Services sponsored a STEM panel discussion, and STJ faculty in STEM discussed their experiences as women in these traditionally male dominated disciplines. Drs. Fatima Amir (Assistant Professor, Physics), Joan DeBello (Associate Professor, Mathematics and Computer Science), Gina Florio (Associate Professor, Chemistry and Physics), Bonnie MacKellar (Associate Professor, Mathematics and Computer Science), Sandra Reznik (Associate Professor, Pharmaceutical Sciences), and Rachel Zufferey (Associate Professor, Biological Sciences), all gifted educators and accomplished professionals engaged students in a lively and informative discussion. They told their stories and discussed first hand issues that have typically been the topic of many research studies over the years.

In support of the research, faculty shared many similar challenges including balancing family and professional life, finding oneself as the only female in a classroom of all males, having no one to talk to and in particular, not having a woman mentor. Other challenges included trying to decide what to major in and sometimes experiencing instances of self doubt. Hearing these personal stories was without doubt enlightening to all in attendance.

Despite these challenges all contributed valuable insights to their success and conveyed positive words of encouragement: don’t be afraid to ask questions, promote yourself, and overcome self-doubt by constantly reminding yourself that you can do anything you put your mind to do. In addition, don’t be afraid of hard work, sometimes you may have to compromise, timing is important, and once you find the area you enjoy, embrace it and take ownership of your own career. Many expressed how strong family encouragement and support were important factors in deciding to enter the science fields.

Learning outside the classroom is an important component of student satisfaction and success, and a priority in the University’s Strategic Plan. This event along with many others that took place during Women’s History Month provided students the opportunity to interact with faculty in a positive environment. Exposure to strong role models for women who plan careers in the sciences contributes to success and helps to change the gender disparity in STEM.

For more information regarding the AAUW report: