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STS Receives Funding to Study Women & Technology with CITI

The Science, Technology and Society Initiative will participate in an effort to recruit women into technology fields.

The Science, Technology and Society Initiative (STS), based in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences (SBS) and the Center for Public Policy and Administration (CPPA), has received funding to broaden the participation of women in technology. The effort is part of a $1.9 million grant awarded to the Commonwealth Information Technology Initiative (CITI) from the National Science Foundation.

The grant, A Commonwealth Alliance for Information Technology Education (CAITE), will leverage partnerships across the state to reach the roughly 1.4 million K-20 students in Massachusetts. Focusing particularly on women and underrepresented minorities, it will identify, expand, coordinate, and integrate best practices for increasing the participation of women and disadvantaged minorities in IT programs statewide.

CAITE aligns squarely with the STS Initiative, which seeks to increase the public understanding of science and technology and promote multidisciplinary collaboration among the natural, physical and social sciences, engineering and public policy. The Initiative addresses several areas, one of which includes a lack of diversity (gender, race, and ethnicity) in science and engineering and which encompasses the Women in the Information Age (WITIA) Project. Directed by Political Science and Public Policy professor Jane E. Fountain, WITIA explores the ways in which women can help shape and construct the Information Age, not merely benefit from using Internet-related technologies.

"CAITE is an important program for the state," Fountain said. "Too few women currently consider careers or higher education in IT in Massachusetts, and partnerships like those developed through CAITE are needed to address the clear under-representation. The rapid growth of IT in society presents great opportunities for women, and we must ensure they are both prepared to take leadership roles in IT and knowledgeable of the type of IT opportunities out there."

Fountain and the WITIA Program are partners with several other UMass Amherst faculty and organizations on this project: Rick Adrion, Principal Investigator, Professor of Computer Science & Co-Director of CITI; Lori Clarke, Professor of Computer Science; Aura Ganz, Professor of Electrical & Computer Engineering; Jarice Hanson, Professor of Communications; Craig Nicolson, Research Assistant Professor of Natural Resources Conservation; and Beverly Park Woolf, Research Professor of Computer Science & Director, Center for Knowledge Communication.