Broadening Women’s Participation in IT: Computer Clubs n’ Virtual Spaces

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Abstract: Information Technology (IT) is one of the top ten fastest-growing areas of job growth in the workforce. The U.S. Department of Labor and Statistics (2005) for example projects the employment rate will grow between 39.5 to 60.5 percent by 2014. Despite the increasing prospects of job growth and increasing opportunities, representation of women entering the field is limited. A huge gap still exists between men and women students regarding intentions to major in computer sciences. This paper outlines an outreach effort designed to increase student interest in computing disciplines through computer clubs. It also explores the use of virtual spaces, such as Second Life, as a means to motivate women’s participation in IT. Virtual spaces hold many possibilities for transforming educational activities by providing a platform for an enriching interactive experience.

Presenter Information

Lani Fraizer is a doctoral student in Educational Technology at Pepperdine University. A graduate of Carnegie Mellon University, she holds a Masters in Information Technology Management, and a Bachelor’s degree from California State University Sacramento. She has extensive experience working with student user groups and technology-based professional associations. Lani is currently serving as the Director of Academic Programs for Culminis. She is also the President of the ACM Student Chapter at Pepperdine University. Her current research interests include learning communities, youth leadership, and workforce development. Lani also works with Microsoft to help evangelize the efforts of Microsoft IT Academy Program’s IT Immersion, a worldwide resource for workforce development. She can be reached at www.lanixii.org.

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Kai Dupe is a doctoral student in Educational Technology at Pepperdine University. A graduate of Texas A&M-Commerce, he holds a Masters in Educational Technology, and a Bachelor’s degree from Trinity University. He has over 20 years of experience working in Information Technology as a software developer and as a Microsoft Certified Trainer. Kai is currently an instructor in the Programming and Database Management department at Kaplan University. He is also Vice President of Education and Training for the ACM Student Chapter at Pepperdine University. His current research interests include social learning, culturally responsive pedagogy, and virtual learning environments. Additionally, Kai travels around the country conducting Microsoft training workshops as
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