

Below are excerpts from San Jose State University's College of Science newsletter, The Scientist.

MentorNet

On the eve of the new millennium, our lexicon is littered with "e"s. Move over, e-mail and e-commerce, now there's e-mentoring: MentorNet, a nonprofit organization that matches women students in engineering and related fields with industry mentors, promotes yearlong e-mail relationships between students and mentors.

Executive Director Carol Muller developed the idea while an associate dean of engineering at Dartmouth. She wanted to find a way for women to persist in pursuing careers in engineering and other sciences. She points out that although women now represent 46 percent of the U.S. workforce, fewer than 10 percent are engineers and 30 percent scientists.

"Mentoring is a proven strategy for enhancing the retention of women in science and engineering," says Muller, "but too few of these students have access to mentors in industry due to time and distance constraints."

Therefore, she explains, e-mail for mentoring eliminates those barriers and allows meaningful relationships to develop and flourish.

Indeed, many participating students have indicated that they learned that there are more career opportunities than they previously knew about. Some have even said that they were more comfortable asking a lot of questions via e-mail than they would have been in a face-to-face conversation.

Since its launch in 1997 the e-mentoring organization has taken off like, well, like the other "e"s. During its first year of operation, more than 200 students were matched with mentors. Last year, 539 students were matched

and this year that number is expected to leap to more than 1,200 students. About 80 percent of the mentors are female, 19 percent are male and 1 percent are anonymous. Sixty-nine percent of participating students are studying engineering, 14 percent computer science.

With a growing network of universities, corporations, professional associations and government agencies that provide funding and recruiting, the network is destined to continue its explosive growth.

For more information about MentorNet, check out their Web site: www.mentornet.net or call the office at 408-924-4061.

Women in Science Issue Introduction

We are proud to introduce this special issue highlighting women in science. Featured are just a few of our trailblazing alumnae and colleagues who have overcome daunting obstacles to persistently pursue their dreams.

Their adventures and accomplishments range from the peaks of the Sierra to the depths of the ocean floor and out into space - both real and cyber - and many fascinating places in between.

Though these women represent a broad spectrum of interests and specialties they all exude the same inspiring energy, enthusiasm, and - most importantly - willingness to share. They share their stories, their experience and their knowledge, and they give selflessly of their time to create networks and openings for aspiring women scientists.

Although each of these barrier-busting women has contributed to the ever-growing acceptance of women in formerly male-dominated frontiers, they will also tell you that there are still many more borders to be crossed by women. We admire their perseverance and salute their dedication to pushing the gates wide open and ushering in subsequent generations of women.