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MICROSOFT RESEARCH AND NATIONAL CENTER FOR WOMEN & IT ANNOUNCE WINNERS OF COMPUTING HIGHER EDUCATION SEED FUND

\$50,000 Awarded to Pilot Programs That Encourage Participation of Women

Boulder, Colo. – January 10, 2012 – The National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT) and Microsoft Research today announced the winners of the most recent NCWIT Academic Alliance Seed Fund, which provides U.S. academic institutions with start-up funds to develop and implement initiatives that recruit and retain women in computing and technology fields of study. Since 2007, NCWIT and Microsoft Research have awarded \$365,450 in funding to 29 universities and colleges. This round of the NCWIT Academic Alliance Seed Fund will provide \$10,000 each to five U.S. institutions:

Claremont Graduate University will team with Scripps College Academy to provide workshops that provide high school, undergraduate and graduate students with mentoring and support to pursue careers in technology and computing.

Fisk University will use its award to integrate software engineering into its GUSTO (Girls Using Scientific Tools for Opportunities) project, which introduces, encourages, and prepares low-income and minority girls for STEM careers.

Union College will pilot a successful Seed Fund project from another institution: a social robotics outreach workshop in which female computing undergraduates serve as mentors and educators for middle and high school girls.

The University of Central Arkansas will build a female-friendly environment for computing majors by recruiting a first-year cohort of women and retaining them with opportunities for learning, research, service, and leadership.

The University of Virginia program will focus on actively recruiting computing graduate students from traditionally underrepresented groups by providing enhanced exposure to graduate programs, facilities, faculty, and graduate student life.

“Studies clearly show that organizations that are more diverse are also more innovative,” said Rane Johnson-Stempson, Principal Research Director for Education and Scholarly Communications Programs at Microsoft Research Connections. “Increasing the representation of women in technical organizations is a critical component of overall diversity, and Microsoft is fully committed to that goal. We’re proud to support the NCWIT Academic Alliance Seed Fund, and we look forward to seeing how these “start-up” projects take this initial funding and use it to grow larger efforts to broaden participation in computing education.”

Women currently earn more than half of all undergraduate degrees in the U.S., including 45% of math degrees and 38% of chemical engineering degrees, but they earn only 11% of computing degrees. High school women account for 47% of all Advanced Placement (AP) Calculus test-takers, but only 18% of those who take the Computer Science AP test are women.

“Women’s participation in computing fields of study is disproportionate to their participation in academic disciplines generally, including other scientific and technical fields,” said Lucy Sanders, CEO and Co-founder of NCWIT. “An innovative program like this one is critical to moving the needle on women’s participation.”

Winners of the NCWIT Academic Alliance Seed Fund report increased female attendance in computing classes and workshops, increased interest and enrollment in computing majors, and enhanced relationships with local high schools.

About NCWIT

NCWIT is a national coalition of over 300 prominent corporations, academic institutions, government agencies, and non-profits working to increase the participation of women in technology and computing. NCWIT's work connects efforts to increase women's participation in technology along the entire pipeline, from K-12 and higher education through industry, academic, and entrepreneurial careers.

The NCWIT Academic Alliance brings together more than 400 representatives from computer science and IT departments at colleges and universities across the country – spanning research universities, community colleges, women's colleges, and minority-serving institutions – to work towards gender equity, diversity, and institutional change in computing higher education. Find out more at www.ncwit.org.