NCWIT Pacesetters is the first, fast-track program of its kind, aiming to move the national needle for women's participation in computing. Company and university leaders work together across corporate and academic boundaries, committed to increasing their organization’s number of technical women at an accelerated pace. NCWIT Pacesetters employ innovative methods and set quantifiable goals to recruit untapped talent pools of “Net New Women” — technical women who would otherwise pursue non-computing careers or would be at risk of leaving.

“Net New Women” include technical women who may have received little or incorrect information about computing occupations and fields of study; may pursue a technical path, if given exposure or encouragement; or may have dropped out or changed careers due to bias, isolation, and other obstacles.

Adding “Net New Women” to the U.S. computing talent pool can yield a larger and more competitive workforce; research shows that groups with greater diversity solve complex problems better and faster than do homogenous groups.

Strategies executed by NCWIT Pacesetters include:

- active recruitment of female college students to computing majors
- changes to curriculum, pedagogy, and culture to improve retention
- development and promotion of mid-career options and workplace policies
- encouragement of women’s contributions to technical innovation

“Change doesn’t just happen. Having goals, a strategic focus, key company stakeholders involved, and a strong NCWIT team leading the way and pushing a bit from behind is crucial and leads to action! “

~ NCWIT Pacesetter
RESULTS
NCWIT Pacesetters held shared accountability for achieving a goal of recruiting or retaining 1,000 technical women in the U.S. computing workforce by 2012. They shattered this goal, reporting 1,685 “Net New Women.” NCWIT Pacesetters demonstrate that innovative strategies can work and pave the way for other organizations to follow.

Although individual organizational goals are held confidential, following are a few examples:

- One corporation doubled its number of female engineer interns.
- Another company piloted a highly successful workshop for over 100 mid-career female technologists to learn how to command presence in executive environments.
- Several universities increased participation of women in computing degree programs by 50-100%.
- A university instituted a new four-year degree program that is attracting double majors in the area of neuroscience, film, and law.

NCWIT Pacesetters also influenced the inception of Sit With Me, a national advocacy campaign that provides a platform to raise the visibility of technical women and acknowledge the valuable contributions of women in computing. Find out more at www.sitwithme.org.

GET INVOLVED
Pacesetter organizations work together in “cohorts” for two years. If you would like to be considered for the next Pacesetters cohort, please contact info@ncwit.org. Find strategies and planning guides to leverage your own efforts, and learn more about the NCWIT Pacesetters program at www.ncwit.org/pacesetters.

ABOUT NCWIT
The National Center for Women & Information Technology is a non-profit community of more than 450 prominent corporations, academic institutions, government agencies, and non-profits working to increase women’s participation in technology and computing. NCWIT helps organizations recruit, retain, and advance women from K-12 and higher education through industry and entrepreneurial careers by providing community, evidence, and action.