



Women in Science and Engineering

by Dana Canfield '16



This summer, I interned with the Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) office at the University of Illinois at Chicago. I had the opportunity to live in UIC housing near downtown Chicago, which was a short walk from my office. Throughout my internship, I dedicated my time to researching academic literature focusing on the persistent underrepresentation of women, especially women of color, in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). I worked with my supervisor to develop a plan for an IRB proposal for my SIP, which I will be completing as an Independent Study in the Gender and Women's Studies department this fall. Much of my research focused on the various intervention programs and initiatives that have been implemented to confront this disparity. This correlates with the mission of the WISE office: to support the advancement of the diverse pool of women entering UIC with aspirations of becoming professionals in the STEM workforce.

The WISE office provides services and resources, including a peer-mentor program and the option to live in a residence hall with fellow WISE students. In addition to research, I helped the office's community outreach director run engineering workshops for high school girls, which provided the girls with fun exposure to engineering as a potential career path for them.

Careers in STEM allow women to achieve economic agency, become influential members of their community, and contribute to the structuring of our society in ways that can bring about social change. I hope to continue advocating for women interested in pursuing STEM careers through my SIP, and as a future member of the STEM workforce.

After learning more about myself this summer, I have realized that I need a hands on job that will enable me to benefit women in a meaningful way while putting my biology degree to relevant use. I hope to apply Physician's Assistant School and eventually work at a women's healthcare practice.

For juniors looking for advice, seriously, start early! Propose your own internship if you have to - I did, and I used descriptions from other formal internships as inspiration. Try and find an internship in a location where you could see yourself living in the future, because the network you establish there will be a valuable resource. Lastly, be honest with yourself about location. Is it important to you to be near your family and friends? If so, keep that in mind - I wish I had. Do you want to learn how to be more independent? Moving to a new city was difficult at first, but I have gained so much confidence in myself as a result."