

TechWomen Offer "STEMspiration" to High School Girls

Friday, November 20, 2015

•
•
•



More than 60 girls gathered at [Manchester School of Technology](#) for a morning of “STEMspiration” on Wednesday. As part of N.H. High Tech Council’s [TechWomen | TechGirls](#) initiative, 12 women with a range of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) backgrounds led discussions to empower the girls to pursue tech careers.

The TechWomen Ambassadors represented a variety of positions in different fields, from robotics to software development to forensics. Employed at high-powered organizations like Autodesk, ChartaCloud, Internet Society, BEI Networks, N.H. Department of Economic Development and more, the ambassadors demonstrated that women should not let gender dictate their career goals.

“The purpose of bringing these women here is to inspire all girls to consider and pursue careers in computing and STEM,” said TechWomen Ambassador [Mihaela Sabin](#), associate professor of computer science at UNH Manchester.

The girls, all first-year students at Manchester School of Technology, were separated into seven large tables. An ambassador would join them at the table to share her career path, answer questions and offer advice, then rotate to the next table.

TechWomen Ambassador Jennifer Brand is senior digital forensic investigator at Techfusion and chief technology officer at Digital Forensics Solutions. Among the students, she was a rock star.

“I can take any device that you hand me and tell you where you were and what you were doing at what time,” Brand said. “I cover cases from people who cheat on each other to murder, and, through technology, I can determine what happened when.”

During her senior year at UNH Manchester, where she was pursuing her bachelor’s degree in [psychology](#), Brand took a class in computer science. She stayed late after class one day to reteach the course to students who were struggling with the material, and her professor found out. After a brief lecture, the professor suggested Brand change her major to computer science.

“It was six weeks before graduation, and I had already accepted a job as a therapist, so I wasn’t doing that,” Brand said. “But 10 years later I was back in her office asking how to get a degree in computer science, because I was much better at that than anything else I had done.”

During her studies in the [Computer Information Systems](#) program, Brand discovered digital forensics. She decided to study away at the University of New Orleans, where she had tracked down a professor who was an expert in the subject. There Brand ended up landing her first job in the field at Digital Forensics Solutions, where she now holds the position of chief technology officer. In addition to her work at two fast-paced companies, Brand is now pursuing her Master of Science in Digital Forensics at Champlain College.

After talking about her career path and what her job entails, the girls were fascinated by Brand.

“You’re the reason I’m here,” said Tonnie. “I just jumped tables so I could talk to you.”

The students eagerly bombarded Brand with questions, asking about her hardest and most high-profile cases, how to protect from hackers and if deleted things are really deleted. Brand’s answer to the last question was that everything on your device can be recovered, which resulted in an outburst of gasps around the table.

“I never said I didn’t believe that was the case,” said Hope. “I’m just fascinated to hear from someone who does it.”

Inevitably, the girls wanted to know how they can pursue a career in digital forensics. Brand told them to take classes in computer science, programming and operating systems, so you can better understand how the different elements work together. She said the most important thing, however, is to believe in yourself.

“When somebody tells you that you can’t do something, find somebody who tells you that you can,” Brand said. “If I had listened to the first person who told me I couldn’t do math, so I couldn’t be in this industry, I would still be a therapist.”

The girls were completely enthused by the end of the two-hour event, which was evident by the buzz of tech talk and excitement throughout the room. For the final minutes, the TechWomen Ambassadors took to the stage to offer their final words of advice and inspiration.

“Follow your instincts. The sky is the limit, because you really can do anything,” said Gunjan Choudhary, software development manager and engineer at Autodesk. “You guys have way more opportunities now than we had. If we can do it, you can do it.”

- WRITTEN BY:

[Kassidy Taylor](#) | Marketing & Communications, UNH Manchester
| kassidy.taylor@unh.edu

UNH MANCHESTER



University of New Hampshire

UNH Today is produced for the UNH community and for friends of UNH.

The stories are written by the staff of [UNH Communications and Public Affairs](#).

Email us: unhtoday.editor@unh.edu.

[MANAGE YOUR SUBSCRIPTION](#)

[CONTACT US](#)

Like us on Facebook

Follow us on Twitter

Follow us on YouTube

Follow us on Instagram

Find us on LinkedIn

UNH Today RSS feeds

UNH Today • UNH Main Directory: 603-862-1234

Copyright © 2022 • TTY Users: 7-1-1 or 800-735-2964 (Relay NH)

[USNH Privacy Policies](#) • [USNH Terms of Use](#) • [ADA Acknowledgement](#)