

SIUE Alumnae and students inspire future computer scientists during SheCode

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EDWARDSVILLE - Alumnae and current female students in the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville School of Engineering (SOE) used their love for technology to inspire local middle and high school girls to consider a future in computer science during the [SheCode](#) event held Saturday, Dec. 2.

The SOE Department of Computer Science hosted participants from Alton, Collinsville, Edwardsville, East St. Louis, Troy and other localities. During SheCode, participants worked with a team of peers and a mentor to create a mobile application. The students came up with their own idea, designed the app, and were able to bring it home to continue to develop as they desire.

“With SheCode, we wanted to remove the male intimidation factor that sometimes exists and promote girl power to see what we could create during a day devoted to programming,” said Meghan Heisler, a senior computer science major who helped coordinate the event. “It’s important to ignite kids’ interest at a young age and then help maintain it, so their passion grows and they feel confident they can study computer science.”



“I’ve already worked with coding over the summer through the Upward Bound Math & Science (UBMS) program, and I want to get better at it,” said Radricka Kelly-Olden, of East St. Louis, a UBMS student and junior in the SIUE Charter High School. “You can do anything with computers and technology, so SheCode is broadening my experiences.”

“I’ve never done this before,” added Kelly-Olden’s teammate Izabella Tognarelli, a freshman at Collinsville High School. “We’re making an app that helps people with their dogs. We start with blocks, which hold the information of what the app’s going to do, what sounds it’ll make, what size images will be and more. We put the blocks together on the computer, and then we can pull it up on our phone to see how our app is working.”

SIUE computer science students Taylor Dowdy, of Wood River, and Brianna Witherell, of Mascoutah, along with Dennis Bouvier, PhD, associate professor in the Department of Computer Science, helped during the event.

Additionally, computer science alumnae, who are now working in the technology field, served as volunteer mentors during SheCode. They included Darla Ahlert, MS’15, a technology enablement consultant at Slalom in Clayton, Mo.; Cathy Casey, BS’15 and Michelle Jaenke, BS’12, both of whom work at Monsanto; Lindsey Shelton, BS’14, with TD Ameritrade; and Mel Jameson, BA’16, with Coolfire Solutions.

“I’m glad to be here to inspire these girls by showing them how exciting computer science is,” said Ahlert, who was encouraged to pursue a degree in computer science by Collinsville High School’s Mrs. Szpila. “I know how rewarding a career in this field can be. I want these young girls to realize that this isn’t just a guy thing. Girls can do it, too.”

The field of computer science is a rapidly growing field with a projected employment growth rate of 19 percent by 2026.

For more information on SIUE’s Department of Computer Science, visit cs.siue.edu.

The [SIUE School of Engineering](http://siue.edu/school-of-engineering) offers one of the most comprehensive and affordable engineering programs in the St. Louis region with eight undergraduate degrees, five master’s degrees and two cooperative doctoral programs, all housed in a state-of-the-art facility. Students learn from expert faculty, perform cutting-edge research, and participate in intercollegiate design competitions. Companies in the metropolitan St. Louis area provide students challenging internships and co-op opportunities, which often turn into permanent employment. All undergraduate programs are accredited by their respective accreditation agencies.