

# SIUE SheCode event engages young women in Computer Science

by Megan Wieser

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EDWARDSVILLE - The field of computer science is a rapidly growing field with a projected employment growth rate of 19 percent by 2026. The Southern Illinois University Edwardsville School of Engineering's Department of Computer Science (CS) wants to ensure females are a part of the field's surging growth and success.

The Department's second annual [SheCode](#) event introduced high school girls, the majority of them freshman, to computer science and problem solving.

Approximately 30 participants came from Alton, Belleville, Collinsville, Edwardsville, East St. Louis, Troy and other localities for the one-day educational experience on Saturday, Dec. 1.

Participants were broken into two working groups: those who had coded before and those who had not. Those with coding experience used Flutter, a framework developed by Google to make iOS and Android applications. They learned about widgets and what goes into creating an app, and then designed their own.

Those without previous experience were introduced to block coding. They also learned what computer science is and the many different ways it can be used.

"I love sharing my love of learning and computer science with these girls," said SIUE senior CS major Taylor Dowdy, of Wood River. "We enjoy showing them that this STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) field is a reachable goal. My favorite moments of SheCode are the 'aha' moments that participants experience when they learn and understand something new!"

With the support of Dennis Bouvier, PhD, associate professor in the Department of CS, 12 current students coordinated the event. Additionally, three computer science alumnae, who are now working in the technology field, served as volunteer mentors during SheCode.

"It's incredibly important for young girls to have female role models and mentors in the technology field, to show them the endless possibilities a career in this field can provide," said Darla Ahlert, MS '15, a technology enablement consultant at Slalom Consulting. "I enjoy making the connection between every day interactions they have with technology and the fact that they can one day be the leaders who create future technologies."

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For more information on SIUE's Department of Computer Science, visit [cs.siue.edu](https://cs.siue.edu).

The [SIUE 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 a cooperative doctoral program. 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. Students gain hands-on experience in the School's state-of-the-art facilities, including the new Fowler Student Design Center.