Going Back to School?
Bellevue University Prepares Women for Jobs in Tech

For many decades, higher education has prepared women for positions as teachers, nurses, or secretaries. Supposedly, we weren’t capable of the analytical thinking required for fields like math, science, or technology. Today, of course, that worldview has changed. At Bellevue University, it has changed so much that the Dean of the College of Science and Technology is a woman.

That woman is Mary Dobransky, and she has been in her position for six years. Mary didn’t start her education in technology—or even with a bachelor’s degree. Her credentials read like those of many students, finding their way by building on what they’ve already learned. She gained a broad base of knowledge while earning an associate’s degree in liberal arts from Broome Community College, which is affiliated with State University of New York (SUNY). Her bachelor’s degree in philosophy from SUNY provided opportunities for writing and analytical thinking. Her training in technology and instruction came while she earned a master’s degree in systems science from SUNY; while there, she was an adjunct instructor at the Thomas J. Watson Engineering School. She is currently pursuing a doctorate of education in leadership at Creighton University, here in Omaha.

The responsibilities of a college dean are many and varied. “I get to work with nearly everyone in some capacity or another,” Mary says. She works with the faculty on strategic planning, curriculum, and mapping where they want the college to go in the future. She counsels students who come to her for advice. Along with the faculty and representatives from other local schools and businesses, she is also part of an advisory group charged with assessing and improving the science and technology program.

Mary’s message to women interested in computers and technology is one of encouragement: Women are great at this! They are needed in the workforce! The future in technology is especially bright for women... plus, it pays well! Education currently emphasizes STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) in the core curriculum. Computers have an increasing influence on our lives, she says. “Technology is more than computer games and word processors. Think of social media and cell phones. Technology is vital in communication, education, socialization—every facet of life.”

Although writing programs and coding are important technology jobs, that’s not all there is to working in tech. “Women are intuitive when it comes to designing hardware,” Mary explains. “For example, use of color, larger screens, portable and more ergonomic keyboards, detached controllers. Women have an innate sense of what will suit the work environment and the worker.” Women can empathize with people who don’t have extensive technology training, I commented on how inadequate and dumb I feel when my questions are answered with tech-talk or occupationally-specific language (slanguage?) or when the person I’ve asked for instruction chooses to just do the task for me, instead. “That’s the kind of feeling women can work around,” Mary asserts. “They can write understandable instructions. They have the patience to explain something and the ability to say the same thing in different ways in order to be understood.”

In addition to their suitability for jobs involving technology, women will find a flexible environment in these fields. “Many careers in technology don’t require you to be ‘on site’ to be effective,” Mary continues. “Some areas of medicine and education are uniquely suited to the flexibility that comes with technology.” Hospitals use pharmacists connected by computer to order medications and specific treatments for their patients. Medical transcription can be done at home. Recordkeeping is simplified, enabling on-site workers to concentrate on their charges.

The same principle applies in education, by providing options to address different learning styles. Bellevue University offers several variations on the traditional classroom. Many are especially useful for the non-traditional student—a person who has been out of school for a while and wants to complete a degree, attain professional growth in her career field, or improve and expand her skills in another area. The learning environment is adaptable, offering formats that are traditional (teacher-led classes), cohort-based (going through the same program with the same group of students), flex-paced (schedules accommodating to different needs), and in accelerated modes. All classes include an online component, and many of them take into consideration a student’s life or previous career experience. The general list of programs offered by the College of Science and Technology is five pages long and includes areas for undergraduate, graduate, and professional growth. Their mission is to meet the educational needs of technology professionals in the areas of computers, business, media, and natural sciences.

For more information, contact Bellevue University online at onestop@bellevue.edu or call 800-756-7920. The phone number for the College of Science and Technology is 402-557-7161. 