

BIS-AITP Hosts Women in STEM Panel

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[Rebekah Brancato](#) *News Editor*

On March 19, the Business Information Systems – Association of Information Technology Professionals (BIS-AITP) student chapter hosted its annual panel on Women in STEM. Each year Eastern alumnae share their experiences in their academic and career pursuits in STEM fields.

This year's panelists included four alumnae from the class of 2017: Julia DePoi (BIS major, Computer Science minor), Brittany Noonan (BIS major), Kimberly Fafard (BIS major, Business Administration, and Healthcare Informatics minor), and Alysha Ciscone (Mathematics and Computer Science dual major). Each of these women currently work at Cigna, a large health insurance company headquartered in Hartford, CT. DePoi and Ciscone are TECDP analysts; Noonan is a Technical Product Owner; and Fafard is a Data & Analytics Software Engineer.

During the panel, which was moderated by BIS-AITP eBoard member Koren Thomas, the alumnae discussed various topics such as the challenges they faced being women in a male-dominated field; what was rewarding about their careers; and advice for women who want to enter the field.

A core theme that was brought up by the panelists was the importance of confidence. All of the women shared that one of their major struggles upon entering the field was a lack of confidence. To emphasize this point, Noonan shared a statistic stating that women apply for jobs that they don't meet the qualifications for 50% less than men do. The panelists advised that, even if you don't know something yet, it is important to utilize your ability to learn new skills and to show that capability to your managers.

Another key opportunity shared was the ability to offer something new to the organization. The alumnae articulated that while they may have felt a lack of confidence at first, it is important to realize that, as a woman in a male-dominated field, they have the ability to offer new and valuable perspectives to the organization.

According to the National Center for Women & Information Technology, while women earn 57% of all undergraduate degrees, only 18% of undergraduate women earn computer or information science degrees. BIS-AITP's Women in STEM Panel showcases the success of women in STEM, and helps give current female students interested in STEM the support and confidence to enter the field.



Women in STEM Panel Discussion

1. What led you to your career in a STEM discipline?
2. What have been some of the major hurdles along your educational and career paths? How did you overcome them?
3. What do you think are some of the unique challenges related to your career journey related to being a woman in your academic discipline and career areas?
4. What do you think has been your single biggest challenge for you related to you being a female in your academic and career journey?
5. What do you think are some of the key opportunities in your STEM career path that have helped you succeed to where you are today?
6. If you were to start your academic and career journeys over, what would you keep the same versus what would you do differently?
7. What has been most rewarding about your career in a STEM discipline?
8. What would be your words of advice to female students interested in pursuing a STEM academic discipline and career area?
9. What would you recommend to Eastern faculty to encourage female students to pursue careers in STEM disciplines?