



# Illinois State University: Using Learning Communities to Recruit Women and Minorities in Computing

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## Program Highlights —

- 1. First- and second-year students enrolled in a general education mathematics course constitute a diverse recruitment pool, almost representative of the student body.**
- 2. Faculty from four academic departments form one learning community to explore ways to link the mathematics course to beginning computing courses.**
  - Mathematics faculty work with computing faculty from CS as well as business and technology departments.
- 3. A small group of seniors and a grad student create an interesting blog about IT topics to entice the mathematics students into an online learning community designed to break down social and psychological barriers to IT participation.**
  - Last semester, the 18 blog postings typically drew about 100 student viewers each, out of a class enrollment of 165. Verification was obtained by having the viewers take a short quiz on the post they just viewed.
  - Students generally rated the posts highly, commonly giving them a mean score of about 3.8 out of 5.
- 4. Weekly visits from diverse professionals meeting with mathematics students after class inform students about the breadth of IT opportunities and humanize the field.**
  - Last semester, professionals ranged from a Latino software engineer from Google, to a female IT executive from State Farm Insurance, to an Illinois State trooper who reconstructs accident scenes using sophisticated software.
  - Typical student attendance ranged from 25 to 30.
- 5. Success will be measured over time by monitoring student choices of major/minor and enrollment in IT course work.**
  - No data yet. Last semester was our first.