August 4, 2015

Hello,

I am the new Outreach Coordinator for the Program for Women in Science and Engineering. I am planning the 2015-16 Taking the Road Less Traveled conferences (TRLT) and wanted to reach out to those who have attended or brought groups to past conferences and let you know about changes we are making to the conference format.

As you know, after reviewing conference feedback from participants and educators over the past five years, we decided that strategic improvements to TRLT were needed to best meet the needs of today’s student. In order to make these changes to the conference, our WiSE External Advisory Board recommended a temporary suspension of the program for spring 2015. During this time, our Director, Lora Leigh Chrystal, and I have been meeting with key stakeholders and working to accomplish the following changes which were approved by the WiSE advisory board at our spring meeting in May.

1. This fall the TRLT registration system will be completely online and will allow students to individually select sessions while managing room capacity for presenters. We are very excited and pleased to offer this new format for registering for the conference! The new registration system will be a two-step process. The first step will involve telling us how many individuals (students and adults) you will be bringing to the conference. Payment for registration will also be required at this time. **This step can be completed beginning August 20th, 2015.** Please visit our [website](#) to access the registration link. For the second step, registration details, including session preferences, will be provided. You will receive information about completing this step approximately one month before the conference date.

2. WiSE will address long waiting lists by focusing the conference on 8th-10th grade students, a critical point in time for career exploration for girls. Age groups no longer served by the conference can participate in the following opportunities offered by WiSE:

   a. Our Student Role Model Program, in which current WiSE students facilitate STEM activities in a variety of settings including classrooms and after school clubs, will serve 6th and 7th grade students.

   b. For 11th and 12th graders, we will continue to develop and expand SWE University, a new type of experience designed especially for these young adults. SWE University, piloted in March of this year, provides 11th and 12th graders a chance to experience college life first hand while spending 2 days on the Iowa State University campus. Students have the chance to visit college classes, interact with faculty, and stay overnight in the Residence Halls with a current WiSE student.

   c. Please visit our [website](#) to learn more about both the Role Model Program and SWE U.
3. Focus the content of TRLT on careers that remain “the road less traveled” to provide awareness to 8-10\textsuperscript{th} grade girls. Visit our [website](#) to see information about these majors at ISU.

4. Provide more robust opportunities for teachers and parents to engage in professional development. One of the topics we will be covering first is how the messages girls hear from adults around them significantly impact whether or not they decide to pursue a STEM field. The Girl Scout Organization has some helpful resources about this topic. [Click here to learn more](#). In addition, we will continue to collect feedback from teachers and parents at conferences to know what kind of professional development would be most beneficial.

5. Restructure the conference day to provide more quality interactions with undergraduate students or “near-peers.” One of the ways we will achieve this is through a new type of informal session during lunch where current STEM students will be available to answer questions and facilitate discussions with participants about pursuing STEM fields at ISU.

One additional change we are incorporating has to do with chaperone requirements outlined in the Youth Policy Guidelines at ISU. In order to maintain necessary adult/student ratios and assist with supervision, we are requesting that groups attending TRLT have **1 adult for every 15 students attending the conference**.

Lastly, the cost for the conference will be $15 per person. Although this amount does not cover the entire cost for one participant, it will allow us to be able to continue providing the conference. As always, we never want the cost to prohibit a student from attending and we will continue to provide scholarships for students who need financial assistance.

Be sure to mark your calendar with our conference dates for this academic school year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall 2015</th>
<th>Spring 2016</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 8 (8\textsuperscript{th} grade)</td>
<td>March 31 (8\textsuperscript{th} grade)</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 22 (8\textsuperscript{th} grade)</td>
<td>April 7 (8\textsuperscript{th} grade)</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 29 (9\textsuperscript{th}/10\textsuperscript{th} grade)</td>
<td>April 28 (9\textsuperscript{th}/10\textsuperscript{th} grade)</td>
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Thank you for your patience as we work to incorporate your feedback and make this the best conference possible. Feel free to share this information with anyone else you know who would be interested, and please don’t hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. We’re looking forward to seeing you this fall!

Kind regards,

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![Program for Women in Science and Engineering](#)