Machine 'Shoppin' With the Ladies

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Engineering design classes require a certain proficiency in the machine shop. Knowing how to identify tools and use shop equipment like a drill press, bandsaw, lathe and milling machine can be a stopper for some students.

That's why the MSU College of Engineering hosted a hands-on remedy for women students who haven’t developed this skill set yet. Each participant was taught how to use the major equipment in the shop and then had an opportunity to practice what they learned.

Organized by Laura Gumpper, a mechanical engineering senior from Livonia, and Tamara Reid Bush, an assistant professor in mechanical engineering, “Shoppin’ With the Ladies” was an engaging learning activity in the Mechanical Machine Shop, Room B250, Engineering Building on Wednesday, Jan. 28.

Hands-on session in the Mechanical Machine Shop

“Some female students are not comfortable with the machine shop and the equipment in it,” said Bush. “Many of them have not previously used this type of equipment. So, we offered an evening where ‘ladies trained ladies’ on the various shop equipment and provided a practice session using the equipment, too.”

Gumpper said the session was important because MSU’s Department of Mechanical Engineering has at least four courses that are heavy on design and build requirements.

“I wanted women students who are hesitant about using machines in the mechanical shop to get this opportunity,” Gumpper said. “My hope is that this exposure will allow women to be more confident in their engineering courses. It's not that women aren't capable,” Gumpper added. “It's just we haven't had many opportunities to develop this skill yet.”

Bush said the activity is also a good retention tool and a way for women to connect with other women in their discipline.

The College of Engineering has about 820 women students, representing 18 percent of the undergraduates.
Related Website: Communications contact: Patricia Mroczek

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