Ways to Keep Women from Dropping Out of Nontraditional Programs

Successful Tech Prep Clusters Should Identify

1. The desired mix of students to be recruited and admitted
2. The level of academic performance desired from the various groups of students recruited, admitted and retained
3. The rate of persistence expected and desired among the student groups
4. Support services that address the areas of greatest student anxiety, frustration and need

Retention Strategies

- Send introductory letters to female students in nontraditional programs to welcome them and apprise them of the support services available.
- Assist students in identifying one person (relative, friend, instructor) who is supportive of their nontraditional career path.
- Provide and encourage participation in support groups so that nontraditional students can meet, share problems, concerns and successes.
- Disseminate monthly and quarterly newsletters to all females enrolled in nontraditional programs.
- Offer shadowing experiences with nontraditional workers in the field.
- Encourage student participation in related professional seminars and state and national vocational organizations.
- Eliminate any stereotypical instructional materials from the classroom. Ensure that classmates do not "squeeze out" nontraditional students from viewing laboratory demonstrations or engaging in group assignments.
- Enforce fair and consistent discipline, dress standards, safety regulations, achievement expectations and grading procedures.
- Offer stamina-building and weight lifting classes to female student in nontraditional programs.
- Offer tutoring to students in nontraditional programs who may need to "catch-up" due to lack of preparation for the subject matter. Consider offering a pre-entry course on technical tools, terminology and skills.
- Establish a policy that advises students to meet with an advisor before withdrawing from a nontraditional program.
- Provide on-site child care, transportation, and assistance with textbooks and other required educational materials, tools and uniforms.
- Sensitize teachers to the effects of bias, stereotyping and discrimination on students. Do they make a conscious effort to call on male and female students in an equitable manner? Do they use the same tone of voice when speaking to students of both sexes? Do they discourage harassment of nontraditional students?