

## Colleges offer networking event for women in STEM fields

SPRINGFIELD – The four community colleges in Western Massachusetts are spearheading a regional effort to connect female community college students with professional women working in science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields.

Registration is now open for the event, which is scheduled for Wednesday, Oct. 24, from 5 to 8 p.m., at the UMass Center at Springfield. The event is free except for a \$5 parking fee at the Tower Square garage.

The Society of Women Engineers affiliate at Springfield Technical Community College and the STEM Starter Acad-

emies at STCC, Berkshire, Greenfield and Holyoke Community colleges, are sponsoring the networking workshop they call #MySTEMStory. Organizers hope the event will build a network for Pioneer Valley women in STEM.

The gathering will feature a panel discussion and Q&A led by mechanical engineer Prasha Sarwate Dutra, a quality manager in a manufacturing facility in Rhode Island. She hosts a website and podcast called "Her STEM Story" to inspire women to pursue careers in STEM.

Beth McGinnis-Cavanaugh, a physics and engineering professor at STCC and faculty adviser to the college's SWE

chapter, said #MySTEMStory creates a unique opportunity to connect STEM students and professionals.

"This will be an opportunity for professionals to inspire the next wave of STEM women by sharing their stories about successes, challenges, motivation and persistence in the STEM fields," McGinnis-Cavanaugh said. "We encourage professional women from any STEM field to join us."

McGinnis-Cavanaugh said many of her students have never met a professional woman working in the male-dominated world of STEM.

According to the United States De-

partment of Commerce's "Women in STEM: 2017 Update," women filled 47 percent of all U.S. jobs in 2015, but held only 24 percent of STEM jobs. Undergraduate degrees are evenly divided between men and women, but women only make up about 30 percent of all STEM degrees.

To register, visit [tinyurl.com/MySTEMStory](http://tinyurl.com/MySTEMStory). Hors d'oeuvres will be served and a cash bar will be available. For more information, contact Beth McGinnis-Cavanaugh ([bmcginnis-cavanaugh@stcc.edu](mailto:bmcginnis-cavanaugh@stcc.edu)), Melissa Paciulli ([mpaciulli@hcc.edu](mailto:mpaciulli@hcc.edu)) or Alysha Putnam ([PutnamA@gcc.mass.edu](mailto:PutnamA@gcc.mass.edu)).