



UTC Spotlight

University Transportation Centers Program

This month: University of Memphis | November 2013

The White House Issued a Challenge...the University of Memphis Accepted

Challenge: Increase the breadth of women participating in the transportation workforce

Challenge Accepted...Enter Stephanie Ivey, Ph.D., with the University of Memphis Intermodal Freight Transportation Institute (IFTI). Ivey successfully works each and every day



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Stephanie Ivey

to increase the number of women entering the transportation workforce. During the school year, Ivey inspires her civil engineering students to think transportation. Through class work and research assignments, she demonstrates the breadth of possibilities. For four weeks in the summer, she mentors middle and high school students through the Girls Experiencing Engineering (GEE) summer program. Ivey connects the dots between amazing female transportation professionals, dynamic hands-on-activities and interesting lessons for the aspiring young engineers. Dr. Ivey assists women as they make the move from wide-eyed high school students to successful college graduates working in the industry.

Because of her dedication to transportation education and proven success developing the workforce, she was one of 50 women invited to attend a round table discussion hosted by then U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. The meeting allowed a variety of female movers-and-shakers to discuss all things women and transportation related. "It was very exciting to be introduced to and working with so many powerful women from the industry," said Ivey. "Even though we came from diverse backgrounds, we all had similar ideas related to the challenges and opportunities for women in transportation." Every meeting attendee was issued the same challenge. The IFTI team at the University of Memphis, led by Ivey, is finding solutions.

Upon Ivey's return to the University of Memphis, the IFTI team assembled a diverse group of Memphis area female transportation leaders including engineers, accountants, lawyers, and sales managers to explore how best to make an impact. Because Memphis is "North America's Distribution Center"

and over 11 percent of the workforce is associated with the transportation industry, this topic is of interest to many mid-south women professionals.

The focus group identified three important elements for successfully impacting the workforce:

1. to educate women on the many aspects of and business roles in the logistics community,
2. to organize mentors by connecting seasoned professionals to future/new participants, and
3. to provide settings for openly and honestly discussing opportunities and challenges.

Furthermore, the group organized the Society of Female Transportation Professionals to serve as a home and structure for their collective efforts. The University of Memphis simultaneously formed the Center for Advancement of Female Transportation Professionals to provide a forum for research, education, and professional development. Both organizations were formed with the common goal of increasing the number of women in the transportation industry.



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Panelists on the Mid-South Women in Transportation panel. From L-R: Adrienne Johnson, Supervisor, Import Operations for V. Alexander & Co; Donna Lemm, VP of Sales & Marketing for Mallory Alexander International Logistics; Cheryl Citrone, Partner for Vaco Logistics and Operations; GiGi Wolfe, Manager Global Engineering Support for FedEx; Karen Hjerpe, Director of Global Operations and Compliance for Dunavant Logistics; Roquita Coleman, Solutions Manager for CN Supply Chain Solutions

On September 24, 2013, the Society of Female Transportation Professionals hosted the Mid-South Women in Transportation Panel and Networking Session. The panel engaged seven dynamic women who showcased the variety of opportunities available through transportation careers and highlighted challenges and successes of women in the Memphis area pursuing these fields. The industry leaders were entertaining, enlightening, and quick to share their experiences.

“It’s so much more than being a truck driver, which unfortunately is the misconception. There are opportunities in accounting, business, engineering—it’s a wonderful career path for women,” said Cheryl Citrone, partner at executive recruiting and consulting firm Vaco Memphis and a member of the Society’s leadership team and moderator of the panel. “If someone would have reached out to me while I was a freshman in college and educated me on logistics, I probably would have chosen it as my career back then instead of stumbling upon the industry by accident.”

Following the panel session the event attendees, consisting of students, faculty, and industry professionals, connected and networked. The panel was extremely well attended by both men and women transportation professionals, including the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Chief Economist, Jack Wells.

Participants left the meeting energized and ready for the next event. The Society is organizing mentoring opportunities, professional advancement seminars, and fund raising activities to provide scholarships for women to earn their college degrees.



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Cheryl Citrone, Partner for Vaco Logistics and Operations, and Jack Wells, Chief Economist for the U.S. Department of Transportation

Ivey shares, “The promise of the future continues to improve for women in this industry. As the director of the Center for Advancement of Female Transportation Professionals, we look forward to continuing the work of so many women who have blazed the trail before us.”

About This Project

The Director Emeritus of the University of Memphis Intermodal Freight Transportation Institute (IFTI) is Martin Lipinski, Ph.D. (mlipinsk@memphis.edu). IFTI (<http://www.memphis.edu/ifti/>) addresses critical issues affecting the planning, design, and operation of the Nation’s intermodal freight transportation systems with an emphasis on the intermodal issues that have local significance with national and international implications. Stephanie Ivey, Ph.D. (ssalyers@memphis.edu) is an associate professor whose areas of research include STEM education research and workforce development, transportation safety, livability assessment, transportation policy, and traffic data analysis.

This newsletter highlights some recent accomplishments and products from one University Transportation Center (UTC). The views presented are those of the authors and not necessarily the views of the Research and Innovative Technology Administration or the U.S. Department of Transportation, which administers the UTC program.

