



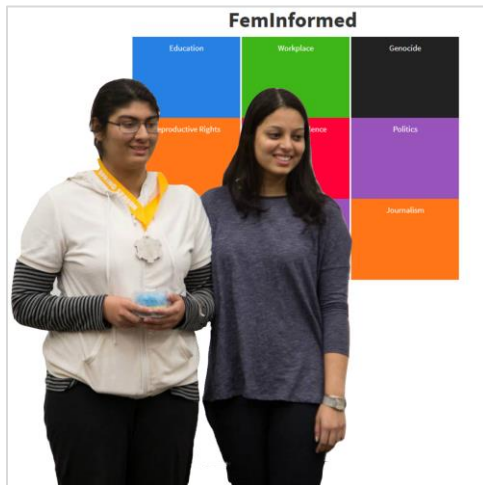
HackHers Hackathon: Building Community along with Code

[February, 2015] Computer Science was the lone field in the sciences to have fewer bachelor's degrees awarded to women in 2012 than in 2002, but Rutgers women in computing are striving to reverse this trend. They are reaching out to younger students through organizations like the Douglass-DIMACS Computing Corps (DDCC) and building a community among peers through the Rutgers Women in Computer Science (WICS) group, which recently organized a hackathon geared toward women.

The “HackHers” hackathon was held February 7-8 in the Busch Student Center at Rutgers University. The event was conceived and organized by computer science students Julie Duncan, Jasmine Feng, and Amanda Goonetilleke—all active participants in DDCC and WICS—with assistance from Elaine Zundl, dean of the Douglass Project for Women in Math, Science and Engineering.



A primary aim of HackHers was to be welcoming to newcomers—especially women, but also men—and get them comfortable with coding. In all there were about 130 hackers, in addition to various sponsors and volunteers, making HackHers small by hackathon standards, but also less intimidating. The event drew many participants from outside the traditional computing disciplines by offering instructional workshops for new coders, talks on topics of general interest (like salary negotiation), and (of course) lots of food.



Rosheen Chaudhry (left) receives the award for best Web application from Kahini Amin

Projects were judged on creativity, technical merit, and potential to make an impact, particularly in improving the lives of women.

Rosheen Chaudhry, a junior computer science major and member of both DDCC and WICS, won the award for best Web application with “FemInformed”, an application that gathers news on feminist issues through the NY Times application program interface (API). Users can search for news in categories that include Education, Workplace, Science, Reproductive Rights, and

Politics, among others. The aim of FemInformed is to provide information on topics that affect women every day, and through information, comes empowerment.

Given the success of the event, WICS members are already thinking about plans for next year's HackHers hackathon.

You can read more about this year's hackathon in the articles listed below from the Daily Targum and mycentraljersey.com or watch the video containing interviews with Julie Duncan and Elaine Zundl.

Related Links:

- Table from NSF on the number of bachelor's degrees awarded, by field and sex: 2002–12: http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/wmpd/2013/pdf/tab5-2_updated_2014_05.pdf
- WICS: <http://ruwics.github.io/>
- DDCC: <http://dimacs.rutgers.edu/DDCC/>
- Daily Targum article, "Rutgers hosts HackHers to promote female participation in technology": <http://www.dailytargum.com/article/2015/02/rutgers-hosts-hackhers-to-promote-female-participation-in-technology>
- "Women empower women at Rutgers' HackHers hackathon" on mycentraljersey.com: <http://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/news/local/new-jersey/2015/02/08/women-empower-women-rutgers-hackhers-hackathon/23079729/>
- Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ruai6Hcy9s>