

Women in STEM Tea



Mechanical engineer Amelia Palmer Hansen demonstrates a tool that measures the temperature at air vents.

Amelia Palmer Hansen, an experienced mechanical engineer, sat at a table with five female Clark College students pursuing degrees in STEM fields.

Palmer Hansen described her work inspecting building projects seeking LEED certification. “My job is super interesting, and it pays well.”

She also spoke about the difficulty of engineering courses. “It’s hard to go to school to be an engineer, but it will open so many doors for you. I feel very fortunate to have my engineering degree.”

Palmer Hansen was among five women working in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) careers who shared their expertise with Clark College women pursuing technical degrees during the Women in STEM Tea on May 15.



Experienced women engineers answer questions posed by engineering students at the Women in STEM Tea.

The event is organized by Professors Tina Barsotti and Carol Hsu. At last year’s event, a panel of Clark alumnae working in STEM fields sat at a table at the front of the room.

Professor Hsu said, “Always looking to improve and create more interactions to help our students network, we decided to try a different format this year: speed networking.”

The speed networking format proved a useful way for Clark College students pursuing STEM careers to mingle and connect with women who paved the way by earning degrees years and even decades earlier. Students formed groups and every 15 minutes, they rotated to another table to converse with other professionals.

Some high school students and women from the community also attended.

Participating STEM professionals were:

- Lisa Barsotti, Clark College Allied Health programs
- Melanie Handshaw, ConMet
- Amelia Palmer Hansen, Glumac
- Cynthia Stewart-Irvin, H.B. Fuller
- Susan Wagner-DeBusman, Kaiser Permanente



A group of engineering students listen to Cynthia Stewart-Irvin, a senior scientist with H.B. Fuller.

The advice given and comments made by the professionals included:

“The communication, collaboration, and team-building skills that women have are assets in STEM fields.”

“As a woman studying engineering, don’t beat yourself up if you’re getting B or C grades. I’ve rarely seen men questioning their ability. Be patient with yourselves. It takes a while to get there.”

“Get involved in professional development and networking groups, even as a student.”

“It’s exciting to see young women going into the engineering field because we need innovation.”

“The industry could use more diversity today.”

The format worked. Students interacted with the professionals, who offered advice and answered questions. Connections were made.

STEM at Clark College

In Clark's STEM programs, students gain hands-on, real-world experience—doing everything from studying microbes to designing rockets to troubleshooting computer networks. With an emphasis on innovation, collaboration, and creative problem-solving, our programs prepare students for a rapidly changing global society.

Learn more

Clark College STEM programs:
<https://www.clark.edu/academics/programs/science-technology-and-engineering/>

Clark's state-of-the-art STEM Building:
<https://www.clark.edu/academics/programs/science-technology-and-engineering/SBG.php>

Photos: Clark College/Susan Parrish