

Written by Ted Nelson

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Simon joins the Adler in encouraging women to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics

In an effort to inspire young women to explore careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), Lt. Governor Sheila Simon will be participating in the first-ever Girls Do Hack event this Saturday at the Adler Planetarium.

“Instilling a passion for these STEM skills can lead to important innovations and job creation in the future,” Simon said. “The Adler is doing a wonderful job of fostering future success. These young women will make a huge difference as the future scientists, doctors and teachers Illinois needs to stay competitive in the job marketplace.”

Conceived and hosted by the Adler, the one-day event will provide 48 young women, ages 14 to 18, from Chicago Public Schools hands-on learning opportunities aimed at highlighting skills needed for STEM professions. The students will be paired with 24 STEM professional volunteer mentors to take part in workshops including developing mobile phone apps, robotics, exo-planet detection and more.

As a science museum that serves as a public center of learning, the Adler developed the event to take an active role in helping young women to consider pursuing careers in STEM-related fields. Girls Do Hack, created by the Adler’s team of educators, scientists and program

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specialists, is bringing together community partners that will introduce girls to female STEM professionals and help them gain confidence in skills required to pursue these careers.

“Girls Do Hack is about teaming students up with dynamic female STEM professionals in a task-based environment where they’ll communicate and work together,” said Michelle B. Larson, Ph.D., Adler Planetarium President and CEO. “In doing so, not only will these young women recognize that they already possess valuable skills they can apply to careers in STEM, but in meeting female professionals with similar interests, they can better envision themselves as a programmer, engineer or scientist.”

In addition to addresses by Simon, Larson and Femgineer founder and Girls Do Hack event partner Poornima Vijayashanker, the event will include informative workshops sessions focusing on specific skills needed to pursue STEM careers including observation, attention to detail, logic, troubleshooting, creativity, communication, perseverance and more.

Simon serves as the state's point person on education reform. In this capacity, Simon is working to increase the proportion of working-age adults with college degrees or certificates to 60 percent by 2025. As part of her efforts, Simon has encouraged STEM development via public-private partnerships to make our state workforce prepared for the highly skilled jobs of the future and ensure continued economic growth.