The IT Workforce Isn’t Just For Men
Conference to Address Issues Facing Women in IT

What do Wal-Mart, Tyson, J.B. Hunt Transport Services, and the State of Arkansas have in common? The CIOs of these respected organizations are all women.

Despite the findings of a survey from the Information Technology Association of America (ITAA) which determined that women and some racial minorities made few gains in employment numbers in the sector between 1996 and 2002, women are heading the technology sectors of some of America’s leading companies.

Experts agree that the under-representation of women and minorities in the IT management workforce doesn't stem from any blatant discrimination, but rather from a "pipeline" issue — women just missed the high-tech job boom.

The Information Technology Research Center in the Sam M. Walton College of Business at the University of Arkansas is taking a step forward in combating this pipeline issue. On Friday October 24, 2003 the Center will host a conference for and about women in information technology. The conference will be the first of its kind in the region and will feature the CIOs of Arkansas’ leading companies. The half-day conference will promote the concept of networking among women in information technology professions. Attendees will have the chance to learn from successful IT executives as well as each other during a variety of activities designed to help them form connections with each other that they can leverage long after the conference ends.

“The fact that the CIOs of these leading organizations are all women who are willing to share their time with us shows that these organizations are taking steps to combat this pipeline issue,” explained Brad Lawless, director of the Information Technology Research Center. “These leading women, along with our keynote speaker, will help to promote the concept of networking among women in technology professions.”

Liz Ryan, the founder of WorldWIT (World Women in Technology), will be this year’s keynote speaker. Ryan was previously the HR Director at US Robotics from 1988 to 1997 and became its first female VP in 1990. In 1999 she founded WorldWIT.org, a collection of local on-line discussion groups that facilitate the networking of women in technology careers and women who work at technology companies.

The executive panel will include: Linda Dillman, Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. (WMT); Jeri Dunn, Tyson Foods, Inc. (TSN); Kay Palmer, J.B. Hunt Transport Services, Inc. (JBHT); Liz Ryan, WorldWIT; Linda Svehlak, 7-Eleven, Inc. (SE); Carolyn Walton, State of Arkansas.

The Center will host the conference from 1:00 P.M. to 5:15 P.M. at the Don W. Reynolds Center for Enterprise Development on the University of Arkansas campus in Fayetteville. The conference will also feature the following planned breakout session topics: Understanding Different Communication Styles in the Workplace, Work/Family Balance, Career Planning, Personal Financial Planning, Managing Teams, and Health and Fitness (Positive Ways to Deal with Stress)