



## WSU student encourages women to become scientists

BY [CARINA JENSEN](#) · JULY 13, 2013

Exhibiting the same passion for her work as Jane Goodall or Marie Curie, Weber State University environmental geoscience student Stephanie Mitts wants more women to become scientists.

Initially enrolling at WSU as an elementary education major, Mitts quickly realized her interests were elsewhere.

"I liked (the program), but I've always loved science," she said. "But I had no one to tell me that it was OK and that I could do that instead."

Seeing a lack of encouragement for women to pursue scientific careers, Mitts realized she wanted to do something about it.

"A lot of times, science, technology, engineering and mathematics classes are viewed as being too hard for women or we aren't programmed (to think) that way," she said. "I think that girls need to realize that they are just as capable, if not more so than men."

Mitts said many college representatives came to her high school and talked to her class about sports or art programs, "but no one came to talk about science. Never. Not once. I want to change that."

True to her word, Mitts has partnered with Hill Air Force Base to create a STEM outreach initiative.

"We're trying to get together a team of people at Weber to help research online math programs for middle-school-age students," she said. "They're trying to start from the ground up, because public-education STEM classes are not great."

The outreach initiative comes as a result of the passing of Utah House Bill 139 this year. According to the Utah State Legislature, the bill will create STEM competitions, fairs, camps and educational programs to encourage student participation in STEM programs.

"It's great news," Mitts said. "I think that it is something that all schools, even Weber State, is lacking. But they need to have an outreach of STEM to women too."

Besides a STEM outreach, Mitts said she believes the best way to encourage women to join the science field is to participate in research.

"This is very, very, very important if you plan on going to graduate school, or even if you plan on working in a lab somewhere or wherever you want to work," she said. "It's really important as a scientist to have research experience."

This summer, Mitts was selected to participate in the Innovative Urban Transition and Aridregion Hydro-Sustainability (iUtah) program. She is one of only three undergraduate women to be chosen for the program.

Currently, Mitts is working with Steven Burian from the University of Utah to develop a universal rainwater harvesting program.

"Stephanie has made contact with more than 30 managers from around the country to determine the approach of other programs," Burian said. "(We want) to determine their approaches they have used to implement their programs and techniques they are using to educate the public, contractors and developers to more effectively use rainwater harvesting systems."

Although Mitts said she loves her classes and programs at Weber State, she has learned more from this summer of research to prepare her after college.

"I want to change those things and make a difference," she said. "I want to inspire women to get out there and get into the field, because we need them."

[20130702Stephanie Mitts](#)

*(Source: Stephanie Mitts)*

*University of Utah student Jem Locquiao and Weber State University student Stephanie Mitts transport supplies for a rainwater conservation project for iUTAH. Mitts is one of three undergraduate women selected for the project.*

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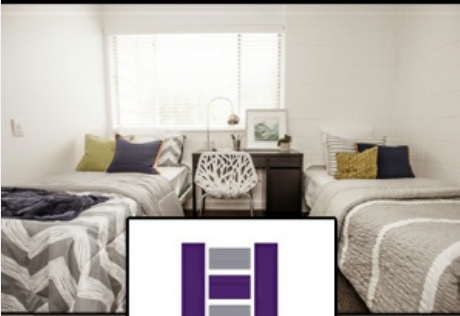
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