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## Improving Success Rates for Underrepresented Students in an Information Systems Program

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# **Improving Success Rates for Underrepresented Students in an Information Systems Program**

*TREO Talk Paper*

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## **Abstract**

Despite decades of effort and millions of dollars invested towards diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives at many U.S. universities, a lack of diversity persists in information systems (IS) programs in both the student body makeup and faculty hiring pools. In 2019, women earned at least half of science and engineering degrees, but only 20% of computing degrees (Hamrick, 2019). Organizations that prioritize diversity consistently perform better and produce more innovative products. Considering that successful technology companies thrive on innovation, they should be clamoring to hire more diverse graduates in STEM and computing fields such as information systems. Despite recent layoffs in the technology sector (mostly related to prospective technologies like virtual reality and artificial intelligence), companies continue to anticipate significant shortages in available talent (Mearian, 2023).

IS graduates are still in high demand and IS programs need to identify barriers to students' success, particularly underrepresented students. Underrepresented students are more likely to encounter difficulties related to financial resources, familial support, and prejudice from faculty and peers. While social inclusion research has begun developing important theories to explain participation in IS such as Individual Differences Theory of Gender and IT (IDTGIT) (Trauth, 2002, 2013), academic research does not always clearly provide practical advice to faculty seeking immediate answers to make a meaningful impact for IS programs.

This TREO talk will present results from a small exploratory, mixed methods study that asked underrepresented students about barriers they faced in an IS program housed in a College of Business in the Southeast U.S. The study was designed and conducted by an undergraduate student as part of her honors capstone project. One hundred three students of all backgrounds were recruited to take an online survey, of which 60 students provided complete answers. From the online survey, seven underrepresented students agreed to be interviewed about their experiences with the IS program. Participants suggested several simple yet impactful, practical and actionable steps that the IS program could immediately take to improve these students' likelihood of success.

## **References**

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