iSchool Colloquium Series

2015

University of Pittsburgh
School of Information Sciences
Information Sciences Building, 135 N. Bellefield Ave.

Friday, April 17

Dr. Lynette Kvasny
Associate Professor, Pennsylvania State University

Applying a Chaos Theory Approach to Understanding the Career Pathways of African American Men in Information Technology

IS Building | 3rd Floor
11:00 am, Reception
11:30 am, Lecture

Some Reports by the College Board, the National Science Foundation, and the National Center for Educational Statistics use statistical methods to analyze national datasets, and have highlighted the educational and career challenges facing young African American men. The grim discourse that flows from this body of work may unwittingly contribute to America's low expectations for African American men and tells us little about those men who do succeed. We only know that they managed to avoid failure.

To gain insights into the experiences of successful African American male undergraduates pursuing IT careers, our research team completed over 80 interviews across 6 universities. Participants were encouraged to explain their career pathways by reflecting on many aspects of their lives, such as their familial circumstances, their childhood, their hobbies, their K-12 educational experiences, and key incidents as college students, and on broader environmental factors, such as African American male identity and political issues.

This research is framed by Bright and Pryor's Chaos Theory of Careers, which posits that individual career choice exists within an interactive system of four primary influences (chance, complexity, change, constructiveness) that flow from immediate family and friends, the local community, and the broader geopolitical environment.

Bio: Dr. Lynette Kvasny is an Associate Professor and an Undergraduate Academic Program Coordinator in the College of Information Sciences and Technology at Pennsylvania State University. She earned her PhD in Computer Information Systems from the Robinson College of Business at Georgia State University. Her research examines how and why historically underserved groups appropriate information and communication technologies. Kvasny is the recipient of the National Science Foundation CAREER award and the Penn State Alumni/Student Award for Excellence in Teaching. She currently serves on the Board of Visitors and the Standing Diversity Committee at the School of Information Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh.