

Paying it Forward: Millibeth Currie on creating opportunities in STEM for youth

By Lauren Gaines (LA '20)

Maya Angelou once said, “When you learn, teach. When you get, give.” Alumna Millibeth Currie (NC '89) is using her education and experience as a woman in STEM to inspire and empower the next generation of female scientists through her work as the Program Director of Women in Charge: Engineering Women's Lives.

Women in Charge, or WIC, as it is affectionately known by students involved, is an empowerment program that seeks to increase the number of female students interested in STEM-based courses and careers. Currie and her colleagues across the region utilize a problem-solving mindset as a catalyst to help girls realize they can engineer the life that they want to have.

“We teach them that they are truly in charge of their choices and their choices will lead to their future lives,” remarked Currie.

Women in Charge began as an idea jotted down in Currie's planner after a group of her female students came to her about concerns in the classroom. The girls felt they were being overlooked and that boys were getting more help and guidance. Currie quickly discovered that the students were remaining silent and feared asking questions, and this was the piece of the puzzle she needed.

“I realized that by being quiet and more passive in the classroom during the early adolescent years, this may have been the reason for the lower math and science test scores our female students had at the time compared to male students. I knew I was onto something, and I had to solve this issue,” said Currie.

As a result, Women in Charge: Engineering Women's Lives was created. Since its inception, WIC has been dedicated to helping female students understand the connection between the real world and what they are learning in the classroom. Currie attributes the success of Women in Charge to the shared vision of her fellow alumnae, colleagues and community leaders who believe in real-world outreach and help make WIC's most impactful programming happen.

Currie, a firm believer that equity comes from opportunity, hopes to create as many opportunities as possible for female students to explore and achieve success in all fields.

“By removing the mystery, you remove the fear, and they begin to redefine possibilities and their future,” said Currie. “We speak to them and show them specific paths that will lead to leadership and success.”



Alumna Millibeth Currie (NC '89) and her students during an outdoor activity for Women in Charge: Engineering Women's Lives