

For Immediate Release

## **Opportunities for Women in Technology**

**GUELPH, Ontario, Canada – CISTers ([www.cisters.ca](http://www.cisters.ca)) – October 5, 2008**

Women are making waves in the field of computer science. Five female students from the Computing and Information Science Department at the University of Guelph have recently returned from the 2008 Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing. The annual conference, which was held this year in Keystone, Colorado from October 01 to October 04, and boasted attendance of 1,433 (mostly female) participants, is clear evidence that you don't have to be a geek to be a computer expert.

The women, Masters of Science students Alana Cordick, Julia Baldwin, and Melanie Veltman, and undergraduate students Ali Tremblay and Annie Wraight, are founding members of a student run not-for-profit group called CISTers (CIS for Computing and Information Science, [www.cisters.ca](http://www.cisters.ca)), whose mission is to encourage girls and young women to pursue education and careers in computer science. Two female CIS professors, Deborah Stacey and Judi McCuaig, who provided vital support for the inception of CISTers, were also in attendance at the conference.

“Computer scientists play an integral role in creating communications frameworks, like email, instant messaging, and social networking – because these technologies determine how the world communicates, it is so very important that diverse perspectives be taken into account in their creation”, says Melanie Veltman, CISTers 2008/2009 President.

According to statistics provided by the Canadian Census in 2006, women constituted 47.4% of the total Canadian labour force, but only 25.9% of computer and information systems professionals[1]. The Canadian Coalition of Women in Engineering, Science, Trades, and Technology (CCWEST) reveals that on university campuses across Canada, similar trends can be seen – in the 2004/2005 academic year, only 13.9% of undergraduate computer science majors were females, even though women represented 58.2% of total undergraduate enrollment[2].

CISTers works towards their goal of raising the profile of women in computing by participating in outreach events to local high schools, and providing support and inspiration to women already in the field. “We started the group with the aim of providing support and networking opportunities to our female colleagues, and breaking down stereotypes. In two short years, we feel we've been successful in accomplishing these and broader goals”, says Alana Cordick, who founded the group in 2007, and served as the 2007/2008 CISTers President.

Luckily, CISTers are not alone in their plight: major sponsors of the 2008 Grace Hopper

Conference include Google, Microsoft, Cisco, HP, Intel, and Sun Microsystems. These companies, as well as others who sponsor the event, recognize the value that women can bring to their organizations, and actively recruit females both at the event and through other initiatives.

Direct inquiries to: [admin@cisters.ca](mailto:admin@cisters.ca).

[1] <http://www.ccwestt.org/Statistics/tabid/59/ctl/Detail/mid/461/xmid/146/xmfid/11/Default.aspx>

[2] <http://www.ccwestt.org/Statistics/tabid/59/ctl/Detail/mid/461/xmid/114/xmfid/11/Default.aspx>

### **About CISTers**

CISTers is a student run, privately funded not-for-profit group in the Computing and Information Science Department at the University of Guelph. CISTers mandate is to encourage women to pursue careers in computing and information sciences. CISTers provides a supportive environment and positive female role models to promote computing related careers to CISTers members. There is no cost to individuals for membership in the CISTers organization.