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STEM Seniors: Lessons Learned from Students Approaching Graduation in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math

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11:30 AM – 12:30 PM (Room 1307)
**STEM Seniors: Lessons Learned from Students Approaching Graduation in
Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math**
Chair: Debra Major, Department of Psychology

This session explores the issues that are important to students graduating from Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) majors. Graduating seniors from majors in the College of Sciences and College of Engineering were interviewed about their experiences as students in their majors and their post-graduation plans. Their responses were analyzed to determine what factors are most important to fostering persistence within STEM fields. This presentation outlines the experiences of STEM students as well as their plans and goals following graduation. Differences related to gender and discipline are explored and implications for such differences are discussed.

Reasons Why STEM Students Choose and Stay in their Majors

By **D. Jeremy Barsell**

The purpose of this presentation is to identify the reasons why undergraduate students enroll and remain in STEM majors. Specifically, this study applies embeddedness theory, which has been primarily used in assessing career satisfaction and job retention, to the university level in order to uncover any overarching themes in choosing and persisting in a major. The results from this study can provide important insight into helping retain individuals in STEM fields.

Gender Differences in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematical Fields

By **Austin M. Hearne**

This presentation explores gender differences in the experiences of STEM students. The results suggest that both male and female students are aware of the underrepresentation of women in STEM, but that the issue is more salient for women. This implies that female students may not feel as welcome or be taken as seriously in STEM fields as men.

Post-Graduation Plans and the Impact of Future Family Influence: A Student's Perspective

By **Rachel E. Green**

STEM students were asked to describe their immediate post-graduation plans. The analyses revealed two major categories of plans: graduate school and immediate employment. Students planning to enter graduate school differ from their peers entering the workforce in their ability to articulate future plans. Students also reported the anticipated impacts of current and future family on their future plans. Common themes and significant gender differences are addressed. Findings show that men and women have unique perceptions of future family conflicts.