

Spring Seminar Series
11:30 AM – 12:00 PM, Wednesday April 10, 2013
The Marriott Hotel, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

**Increasing Diversity in STEM: Understanding How Stereotypes
Create Barriers to Participation and Performance**

By
Prof. Laurie O'Brien
Tulane University



Abstract: This talk will discuss scientific and psychological research on the multiple ways in which negative stereotypes can create barriers to the participation of women and under-represented ethnic minorities in STEM fields. Negative stereotypes about women and ethnic minorities are pervasive and can lead to discrimination against these groups, even among people who do not intend to be discriminatory. In addition, negative stereotypes can create threatening environments that make it difficult for women and ethnic minorities to perform at their true level of ability. Among women and ethnic minorities, stereotypes and subtle cues in the environment can also reduce feelings of belongingness and interest in pursuing STEM careers. Finally, psychological research suggests methods for both changing stereotypes and reducing the negative impact of stereotypes on women and ethnic minorities.

Laurie O'Brien is a social psychologist and an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at Tulane University. Trained in the areas of prejudice and stigma, her research explores how lay people perceive (and fail to perceive) prejudice. She is interested in the similarities and differences between the processes through which people from high status groups and people from stigmatized groups make judgments about what constitutes prejudice. Her research also examines the consequences of perceiving prejudice and stereotypes for people from both target and perpetrator groups. Dr. O'Brien has published papers in respected outlets in her field, including *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, and *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*. Her research has received funding from the National Science Foundation, the Louisiana Board of Regents, The Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, and Tulane University's Research Enhancement Fund.

