

## Student Letter

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*Several faculty members reached out to current students and recent alumni to ask for their impressions of Valparaiso University.*

*Abigail Hedlin is a recent graduate of the College of Engineering (Civil Engineering).*

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**From:** Hedlin, Abigail

**Sent:** Wednesday, November 23, 2016 9:22 AM

**To:** Karl Schmitt

**Subject:** RE: VALPO: Request for Help/Info

I forgot to put this on my to-do list, which means it didn't happen! Since the questions are somewhat similar, I combined my responses into one longer answer.

There are three main ways in which Valpo creates a supportive community for female engineering students.

First, the College of Engineering provides financial support to send students to conferences, specifically Society of Women Engineers conferences. It can be difficult for female students to find an outlet where they can openly discuss their career paths, passions, and problems with sexism in the work place with other women who have had similar experiences. Although Valpo works hard to support their students on campus, the College of Engineering also recognizes its short-comings, mainly the lack of women in STEM departments. It's not always realistic to just hire more women, so the College of Engineering helps women find a supportive community by encouraging students to enhance their network by attending conferences.

Second, and with a similar intent, Valpo's College of Engineering brings speakers to campus who help promote a sense of community and support for women in STEM fields. For example, in 2015 alone, Valpo hosted the Society of Women Engineers president Stacey DelVecchio, and the College of Engineering hosted a Dale Carnegie Women in Business Leadership seminar for all students, staff, and members of the community.

Finally, Valpo's College of Engineering listens to the female faculty, staff, and students when problems arise. Complaints of sexism or other misconduct are taken very seriously. It would be easy for Valpo to point to the good things they are doing to support their minority engineering students and gloss over some of the more negative issues. Instead, Dean Johnson holds meetings, discussions, and unity events until all students feel they are heard and the problem is addressed. Just recently, I received an email about sexism in the College of Engineering and how some female students were not receiving the respect and support they deserved from their peers. Dean Johnson immediately took action by setting up a system that holds students accountable for their inappropriate actions and by coordinating an event in which Valpo's College of Engineering came together to once again commit to equality on campus.

I hope this helps! Let me know if you need me to tweak my answers to better work for the grant's application.

Abigail

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Abigail Hedlin  
Civil Engineering '16