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PENN STATE NEWS

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CSATS liaison named a STEM ambassador

March 06, 2018

Amanda J. Smith, STEM outreach and engagement liaison of the Center for Science and the Schools (CSATS) in the Penn State College of Education, has been accepted as one of 36 ambassadors in the Pennsylvania STEM Ambassadors Program. The program aims to shape the future of STEM education in the commonwealth by targeting vital policy conversations to legislative leadership in the areas of STEM learning ecosystems, computer science, state and federal policy for formal and informal education, and workforce needs.

Ambassadors met for their inaugural training session on March 1 at the Center for Schools and Communities, a statewide training and consulting organization that offers a continuum of efforts around education topics.

Housed in the College of Education, CSATS bridges research and education in STEM. The center focuses on providing teacher professional development programs to connect STEM researchers and K-12 educators through workshop activities that promote current best practices in science teaching and learning.

Smith's role focuses on building relationships with school divisions, higher education, and STEM industry to better support STEM education and enhance professional development opportunities for teachers with the center. She has built a public database, Navigate Education in Pennsylvania (<https://nav.csats.ed.psu.edu/>) to help stakeholders search education entities through a variety of criteria, which heavily supports partnership development with Penn State and research grant collaborations. She also is the Penn State representative for 100kin10, a national organization involving higher education, industry, foundations and other stakeholders to address the grand

challenges in STEM from preK-12 education through the STEM workforce. Smith currently is working on her doctorate with a focus on STEM education/industry partnerships and their influence on the K-12 education system. Representing leaders and emerging leaders in corporate, PreK-12 and higher education, and after-school programs from 18 counties, PA STEM ambassadors have agreed to invest the next nine months in training and education to share expertise and content knowledge with influential stakeholders to help develop a stronger voice in shaping STEM education policy issues.

"In order for Pennsylvania to be competitive and lead in STEM policy, we need to develop leaders who find bipartisan support in advancing STEM Education policies and have the respect and influence to affect change," said Laura Saccente, director of Pennsylvania Statewide after-school and Youth Development Network (PSAYDN). "The PA STEM ambassadors will be a vital part in shaping these policies."

PSAYDN collaborated with the Education Policy and Leadership Center (EPLC), the national STEM Education Coalition, the Afterschool Alliance and staff from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, through the PA STEM Education Coalition, to provide training support to the ambassadors.

Operating since 2004, CSATS works collaboratively with scientists and engineers at Penn State and with industries to design, develop and implement many outreach programs and workshops for K-16 education. The staff's experience in STEM education programs and strong collaborations with researchers has enabled them to build meaningful interdisciplinary programs. Ultimately, CSATS programs seek to support teachers in preparing the future STEM workforce by providing learning experiences that engage students in the practices and thinking used by scientists and engineers.

Pennsylvania Statewide Afterschool/Youth Development Network (PSAYDN) promotes sustainable, high-quality out-of-school time youth development programs through advocacy and capacity-building to enhance the welfare of Pennsylvania's children, youth and families. PSAYDN operates under the premise that all children and youth deserve access to programs that encourage positive youth development and support the successful transition to adulthood. PSAYDN is managed by the Center for Schools and Communities. More information is available at www.PSAYDN.org online.



IMAGE: STEVE TRESSLER/VISTA PRINT STUDIOS