Title: Research on Inclusive Practices: Supporting Two-Year College Transfer Students in the Physics Community

Vashti Sawtelle
Associate Professor
Lyman Briggs College & Department of Physics and Astronomy

Abstract: Two-year colleges enroll almost half of the nation’s undergraduate students (AACC, 2014). While nearly 40% enroll in STEM or health science degree programs (Van Noy & Zeidenber, 2014), only 13% of those who plan to earn a bachelor’s degree will do so within 6-years (Horn & Skomsvold, 2011). Two-year college students are also more likely to come from underrepresented groups, low-income households, or first-generation backgrounds than students at four-year colleges (AACC, 2014). Considerable research has shown a connection between students’ confidence in their ability to perform well (also known as self-efficacy) and persistence in science fields. In this presentation I will describe what we know about supporting community college students in pursuing physics and STEM pathways. I will also outline research on a successful program that provides transitional support to community college students pursuing a bachelor’s degree in STEM.

Short Bio:

Vashti Sawtelle is physics education researcher who studies how learning environments support (or inhibit) students from diverse backgrounds in their learning physics. She co-directs the Physics Education Research Lab at Michigan State University (perl.natsci.msu.edu) where her work focuses on understanding the role active learning, modeling, and interdisciplinary classrooms (i.e. physics for biologists) have to play in creating supportive learning environments for all students.