

New IHMC researcher first in Women in Technology lecture series

By Louis Cooper, Special to Innovation Coast



Women along the Emerald Coast who work in technology-related industries – or who would like to – have a new resource to help them better navigate the field.

Innovation Coast's Women in Technology Committee is inaugurating its lecture series with a talk by Dr. Dawn Kernagis at 4 p.m. April 28 at the National Flight Academy. Kernagis is a research scientist at the Institute for Human and Machine Cognition, or IHMC.

Admission to the lecture is free. Those wishing to attend may register at [Eventbrite](#). The National Flight Academy is located onboard Pensacola Naval Air Station at 1

Fetterman Way.

"Our mission is to develop an alliance to advance, advocate and support women in technology," said Michelle Horton, chairwoman of the Women in Technology Committee and treasurer for Innovation Coast. Innovation Coast is an alliance of companies and institutions of higher learning in Northwest Florida that works to promote and grow technology and knowledge-based companies in the region.

"Our efforts are aligned with the Innovation Coast mission to grow, sustain and showcase the region's successful, vibrant ecosystem of technology companies, professionals and investment opportunities," Horton said. "Women are an important part of the growing demand of workforce in technology industries, so we want to establish a forum that promotes networking opportunities and career exploration."

Dr. Sharon Heise, associate director of IHMC and a member of the committee, said overcoming the historical gender bias against women in technology fields is a primary challenge for the group.

"It's happening, though, and you only have to look around at IHMC to see that diversity helps promote innovation," she said. "Innovation in the workplace is a team process where different skills, experiences and perspectives create a whole greater than the sum of its parts."

Kernagis earned doctoral degree at Duke University after having received a bachelor's degree at North Carolina State University. Her thesis research focused on gene array-based diagnostic development and how genetics might influence individual susceptibility to decompression sickness in Navy divers.

"Dawn is our inaugural speaker, and we are looking forward to hearing her talk about her work in human performance optimization and risk mitigation in extreme environments, such as those encountered in undersea diving, high altitude aviation and space," Heise said.

"Dawn is new to Pensacola, and her research area is a new direction for IHMC. So we are hoping to make new connections and stimulate new interests in the community."

The Women in Technology committee is the brainchild of Lindsay Ryman, the director of programs for Innovation Coast. Ryman also serves as vice president for membership and operations with the Greater Pensacola Chamber.

"Events will continue quarterly," Ryman said. "We welcome suggestions for speakers and topics. They may be sent to info@innovationcoast.com."

Horton said she hopes the lectures will just be the beginning of activities for the Women in Technology Committee.

"We are in the early stages of development of the Women in Technology forum," she said. "In addition to quarterly lectures we hope to connect women to resources, through a strong online presence, that promotes collaboration, networking and entrepreneurship for the technology industry in Northwest Florida."