



Faculty Corner

Women in Science: Picking Up STEAM from Students in Uruguay

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It has been a rough couple of years. In Biology pandemic challenges were amplified by a series of unexpected tragedies, hitting our core. Community support and silver linings are helpful positives. I am excited to share one such silver lining that turned out to be an impactful learning experience for both students and for myself...

In early October of this year, I got to participate in an event, "STEAM is for Everybody," to support women in science in Uruguay. [Why Uruguay, you might ask. Read on for the answer!] Along with other women scientists, I was asked to share some challenges faced in going from (in my case) "farm to faculty." The audience was university students of multiple genders in career tracks involving science, technology, engineering, arts, and/or math (STEAM). Our event was part of a larger "English immersion camp" for the students.

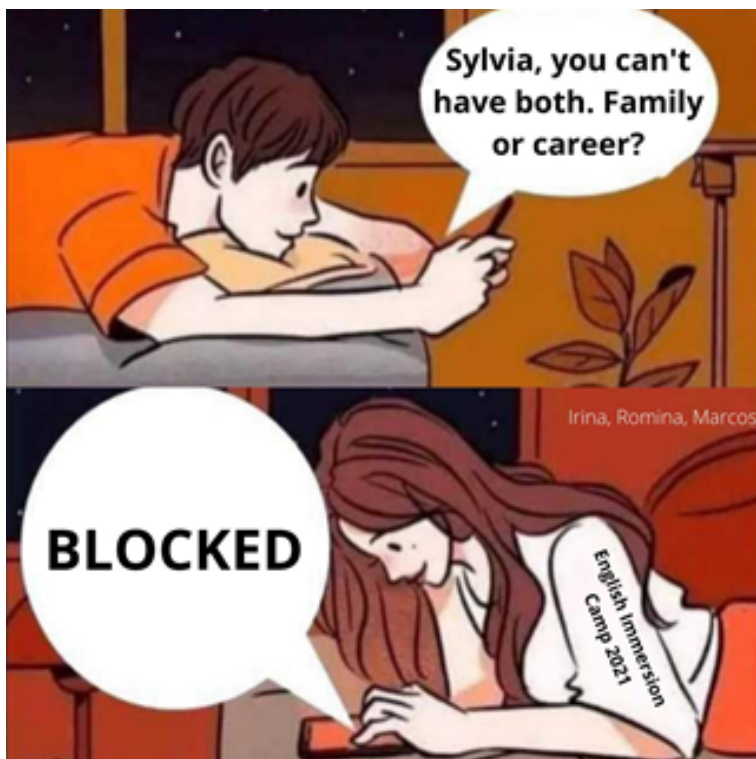
One main challenge I shared was one that came up after I had earned my Ph.D.: I was told by virtually everybody except my husband -- even those with good intentions -- that 'as a female, you cannot have a family and have a science career, period.' I did not really need to share that I overcame this challenge and had kids while pursuing a science career because my grown daughter was one of the event facilitators and the reason I was at the conference! We discussed other challenges faced by women in science professions. It was striking to see how many roadblocks the women speakers had experienced in common. One student, Irina, shared -- that she was especially inspired, as a single mom, by my story. So -- while I was there to support the students, I found their empathy and enthusiasm (and youth!) truly inspirational and a welcome silver lining in these trying times.

Afterward, the students created visuals to capture the essence of what they learned. Here is one that expresses some of the common challenges faced by women in science:

THE CHALLENGES OF A FEMALE SCIENTIST



And my personal favorite:



The “STEAM is for everybody” event left me with so many positives, including new-found science faculty and student connections in Uruguay, but also a renewed commitment to support the female students at SVSU that will hopefully represent the new face of women in science moving forward. I will take the opportunity to share this experience with students in my classes, to hopefully encourage more women to feel supported in science careers as they move beyond SVSU and to help their male counterparts develop increased awareness of and empathy around these issues.

Would you like to contribute to the “Faculty Corner?” Submit your topic idea [HERE!](#) In general, topics can be around anything related to teaching at SVSU. Contributions should be 1000 words or less and conversational and nature. Consider the following questions for inspiration: What is a learning experience for students you have implemented and are excited to share? What inspired you to pursue this type of learning experience? What impact does the learning experience have on students? How could you see this translating into other educational settings?