Dear Faculty,

I am a Co-PI in the **NSF Texas State STEM Rising Stars grant** that looks to improve the retention of first and second year students in STEM. I lead the **Viz Stars project** that provides Spatial Visualization Skills (SVS) training to students.

I am excited to share with you the **two different opportunities (I & II) Viz Stars offers this year!**

I. **FOR STUDENTS:**
   - Free face-to-face Viz Stars training with an instructor, workbook, software to improve SVS, fun social community building and a chance to meet friends.
   - Free lunch, t-shirt and $25 gift card for attending at least 5 of the 6 training sessions!
   - **Fall’17 Viz Stars training:**
     - Instructor: Dr. BJ Spencer
     - Six sessions - Fridays, October 13 – November 17, 12:00 pm – 2:30 pm
     - RFM 4231: free lunch (12:00 – 12:30 pm), RFM 4236: training (12:30 pm – 2:30 pm)

   **How does a student learn about the face-to-face Viz Stars training and decide to join it?**

   The **two-steps process** is as follows:

   1. In the third week of classes, **freshman students majoring in Engineering, Engineering Technology, Mathematics, Computer Science, Physics, Chemistry, Bio-Chemistry and Biology receive an e-mail invitation to take a diagnostic available at the VIZ STARS TRACS site under the Assessments option.**
      - The diagnostic for Fall ‘17 is available from 09/13/17 8 am to 10/10/17 8 pm.
      - The computerized diagnostic has 30 multiple-choice spatial reasoning problems that must be answered on an uninterrupted 30-minute time slot.
      - Students get results immediately after completing the diagnostic.

   Where **everybody is welcome** to join the Viz Stars training, our **target audience** are students that **score 21 or less** in the diagnostic. Research has shown that those with more developed SVS tend to get better grades, on average, in STEM courses.

   2. The **VIZ STARS Tracs site** has a **sign-up option** for students to enroll in the training immediately after taking the diagnostic and learning about their scores. Student’s schedules must permit them to attend all six training sessions.

**How can faculty help to advertise the Face-to-Face Viz Stars training to students?**

1. Show the attached flyer in your class and/or upload it in your course TRACS site.
2. Encourage students to take the diagnostic and sign-up for the face-to-face Viz Stars training. You may want to give students extra credit for doing these two steps.
3. The **VIZ STARS TRACS site** has as participants freshman students in the programs listed in the previous question. Per faculty email request, others can be added. Email me the student names and e-mail alias. **Excel format or exporting your roster from TRACS is the best!** Providing major and classification (i.e., sophomore, junior, senior) is desirable but optional.
II. FOR FACULTY:

- A $300 stipend for embedding the SVS training into your current courses.
  - You will get access to a TRACS site that has the SVS diagnostic.
  - If your classroom has University computers, you and your students will be able to access the SVS training software from them.
  - Students can purchase a workbook at http://www.higheredservices.org/product/workbook-and-instructional-software-bundle/ for around $40. By scratching off the sticker at the back of the book, students obtain the access code for using the software at the web from any personal computer.
  - If you inform us one semester before the training date, we can order the workbooks to avoid students incurring this cost.
- Opportunity to participate in the ongoing research about SVS and retention in your discipline.

**How can faculty get involved in the $300 opportunity for embedding an SVS training into your current courses and participate on research about SVS?**

- E-mail Dr. BJ Spencer bjspencer@txstate.edu if your class is in Engineering, Eng. Technology, Mathematics, Computer Science, Physics, Chemistry, Bio-Chemistry, Biology or STEM education
- Dr. Spencer will add you to the Embedded SVS TRACS site she has created for faculty to use in their class. The assessments can be transferred to your current class Tracs site where you can assign the SVS pre-diagnostic and post-diagnostic. The book assignments assist the students in improving their SVS skills and can be assigned as labs or homework. By submitting the data, results, and student signed consent forms to Dr. Spencer and Dr. Novoa, you will receive a $300 stipend at the end of the semester. You will also be entitled to use the data collected for your own research/teaching.

I am glad to receive questions and/or your interest in participating in these opportunities! http://lbj-stem.education.txstate.edu/Research-Projects/NSF-Rising-Stars.html

Regards,
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