

# Instructor: NTU aims to educate more women in science fields

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**C**ROWNPOINT — Racquel White is studying to become a chemical engineer. The 22-year old woman from Gallup was printing her first 3-D prototype at the Navajo Technical University Center for Digital Technology Fab Lab in Crownpoint March 9. She was quietly working by the 3-D printer in a lab dominated by men.

The young woman said she felt comfortable and had no problem with being the only woman in the program, but hoped more women would join.

"I hope other women get interested," she said, adding she has the support of her parents and siblings, which is encouraging to her.

While White may be the only woman in her program, more women are pursuing careers in science at the university, and research and internship opportunities are available for them.

Navajo Tech Center for Digital Technology Fab Lab Director H. Scott Halliday said White is one of seven women students who were admitted into the internship program through the lab



Vida Volkert/Independent

Racquel White, 22, is seen working on a prototype at the Navajo Technical University Center for Digital Technology Fab Lab in Crownpoint March 9. She is studying to become a chemical engineer.

this year. They are working on research projects funded through the National Sci-

ence Foundation, NASA and the Department of Energy. Halliday said four male students have also been admitted to the internship program.

White is doing research on alternative biofuels for rockets. She said current fuels are extremely toxic and she would like to contribute to research on finding more economical and environmental fuels. If everything goes as planned, White will be graduating with an associate degree from the university in the summer of 2018 and most likely transfer to the University of New Mexico or New Mexico State University to continue on her path to a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering, she said. She hopes to continue her studies

to higher levels and pursue a career in science.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, women make up 47 percent of the total U.S. workforce, but are much less represented in particular science and engineering occupations. They comprise 39 percent of chemists and material scientists, 28 percent of environmental scientists and geoscientists, 16 percent of chemical engineers and just 12 percent of civil engineers.

The National Girls Collaborative Project reports many women end their science, technology, engineering and math track at the bachelor's degree level by not pursuing STEM jobs upon graduation. Some of the reasons for delaying or ending their careers in science include maternity, high costs associated with child care, and gender bias and sexual harassment in the work place, according to a report compiled by U.S. News & World Report.

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