



News Release

January 20, 2009
[Nancy Livingston](#)
Public Relations
651-779-3222
Fax 651-779-3470

[Century College](#)
3300 Century Avenue North
White Bear Lake, MN 55110

Century College Launches Mechanical Engineer Who Never Thought She Could Do It

Century College's new mission statement says the college aims to be a national leader in "transforming lives." Here is an example:

Between 2005 and 2008, Jennifer Reinhart, 43, of St. Paul, who is both a Macalester College and a Century College graduate, went from being a part-time receptionist with low math and science skills to being a mechanical engineering student at the University of Minnesota with perfect 4.0 grades and great career prospects.

"I am leaving (Century) with a 4.0 GPA and a belief that I can be something I never thought I could be," Reinhart wrote in a letter to Dr. John O'Brien, acting president of Century. "I don't think there's anyplace else in the world that could have done this for me."

In a recent interview, Reinhart explained that this transformation happened because she started believing that she could handle the math and science it takes to become an engineer if she simply worked hard enough. Math and science faculty and staff members at Century encouraged her, and Reinhart was named Century's Outstanding Math Student for 2007-2008. (Her picture currently hangs in the hallway outside

the Math Resource Center on the third floor of West Campus. Instructors say it motivates others to succeed.)

Reinhart, the daughter of an engineer, graduated from South High School in Minneapolis in 1984 and then earned a degree in cultural anthropology from Macalester College in 1988. Because she didn't do very well in math and science in high school, Reinhart was convinced that these areas were beyond her reach. But after working part-time in a medical clinic for 15 years while she raised two children, she decided she would try to become a radiologic technician and began taking classes at Century at age 39. She later changed her goal from radiology to mechanical engineering after experiencing success in a series of tough classes at Century.

“There is no doubt in my mind that I wouldn't have considered a degree in engineering if I hadn't come to Century,” said Reinhart. “I was really, really worried about taking my first class in physics. But that class with Dr. Robert Klindworth completely changed the way I thought about myself. I did really well and for the first time in my life, I thought maybe I was wrong about all the things I thought I couldn't do.”

Reinhart said in the past when she encountered problems she didn't understand, she tended to give up. But as an adult student, she simply persisted until she found a solution.

After doing so well in physics, she tried taking a chemistry class and then, calculus. Again, she surprised herself. “I did so well that I started to think that maybe engineering was my field,” said Reinhart. “I began to think that instead of being someone who uses medical equipment, I could be someone who designs it.”

Reinhart signed up for her first engineering class in the spring of 2007, and it went very well. She also became friends with a group of other Century engineering students, many of whom transferred with her to the University of Minnesota's Institute of Technology to also pursue majors in mechanical engineering. The group members still see each other at the university and compare notes about their progress. Because of the personal attention they received, the Century students feel better prepared for the university than many of the students who started at the university.

“Five years ago, if someone had told me that I should be an engineer, I would absolutely have said, ‘Not if I live to be 100 will I ever be an engineer’,” said Reinhart. “But, here I am, a junior at the University of Minnesota with a 4.0 GPA and an engineering major. Amazing.”

Reinhart said she has observed that her 11th-grade daughter, who also thought she didn’t like math, is now excelling in math and science after stepping up her efforts.

“Like mother, like daughter,” said Reinhart. “When I was in high school, I thought people who got good grades in math and science just were gifted, not necessarily hard workers. Actually, they were working harder than I realized. My daughter has learned that just hitting the books makes a big difference.”



Photo: Jennifer Reinhart and her photo as the Century College Outstanding Math Student 2007-2008