By Yvonne Lund

We hear a lot about the so-called "brain drain" these days — Canada's best and brightest minds leaving for the money and opportunities of the U.S.

Although media reports paint a dismal picture, there is still a cadre of world-class researchers who call Canada home. The University of Victoria, for example, is fortunate to have many fine scientists who are quite happy to stay in Canada.

In the computer science department, Dr. Micaela Serra is one who has made a conscious choice to live and work in Canada. Serra is an internationally known expert in fault-tolerant testing for computer chips — used in developing stable and robust computer components.

She is also an outspoken advocate for women in computer science. Originally from Italy, Serra earned her degrees at the University of Manitoba and UVic. In 1987, she became the first female faculty member in UVic's computer science department.

Although many in her field have emigrated to Silicon Valley or Redmond, Serra feels a sense of obligation to the taxpayers of Canada. "I am very aware that taxes — my taxes — are paying for my research," she says.

It's a sense of obligation her students seem to

Brain drain/brain gain?

On May 24, Stats Canada released a study showing that, during the 1990s, the loss of highly skilled workers to the U.S. accelerated, but so too did the influx of highly skilled workers into Canada from abroad. The picture is far more complex than that of a simple loss of workers in knowledge-based occupations. Details are available on the Stats Canada Web site: <http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/000524/d000524a.htm>.

Surrounded by computers

Computers are a lot more than the hunk of plastic that sits on your desk. Tiny embedded computer chips that control a mind-boggling variety of appliances make up 92 per cent of the chip market. They are in cardiac pacemakers, diabetes self-test kits, carbon monoxide detectors, nursery monitors, thermostats, and thousands of other familiar — and sometimes life-sustaining — devices.