

Weir's ESCO division committed to increasing access, gender equity in Oregon's STEM workforce

Engineering firms are confronted with a big workforce gap in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields: only a small fraction of today's engineers are women -- less than 13 percent, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

ESCO, a leading global brand and division of The Weir Group with a 106-year legacy of engineering expertise, is working hard to initiate conversations around gender equity and diversity in engineering to help raise that 13 percent.

As an engineer and second-generation employee, I am proud to follow in the footsteps of my dad, who spent his 39-year career with the company. I am also inspired by my mother, who challenged norms in the late 1970s working as an operations supervisor in a large paper mill. Looking back, I am fortunate that my parents encouraged me to continuously learn and step outside my comfort zone so I could grow as an individual.

My parents took me to their respective jobs during "Take Your Kid to Work Day" so I could see what they did. In our house, we always talked about "keeping doors open" for future



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opportunities, which meant continuing to take science and math classes, even if the courses were not required for high school graduation. Through these types of experiences, I grew confident, willing to experiment and I became inspired to pursue a STEM career.

In 2017, the proportion of engineering degrees awarded to women reached a 10-year high: just over 21 percent, according to data gathered on U.S. engineering colleges by the American Society for Engineering Education. Nearly a third of women transfer out of STEM degree programs, and of those who earn bachelor's degrees in engineering, just 30 percent remain in the field two decades later, according to the Society of Women Engineers.

These statistics show we must do more to encourage young girls to pursue STEM, and support women working in the industry.

Providing access and encouraging exploration

of STEM is essential. At Weir, we know that supporting long-term gender equality and diversity in the workforce is fueled by investment, resources and skills development in local STEM education at the K-12 and college levels. It also means encouraging women and supporting them once they've entered the STEM workforce.

Weir's ESCO division has more programming and initiatives designed to create a more equitable workforce, including promoting an active women's network, broadening our recruiting efforts, creating awareness about unconscious bias, and continuing to connect with high schools and the community so young people can see what STEM careers look like. Participating in events like the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry Maker Faire inspires kids to experience STEM right in our own backyard.

But the work doesn't stop inside the walls of schools or companies like Weir. As parents, teachers and community members, we can all play a part by raising awareness, encouraging girls to become engaged in STEM and empowering them to pursue careers in these fields. Join us in taking action to raise the 13 percent.