

Bridging the Gap: Mentorship and Representation in STEM field

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The field of STEM has long been shaped by innovation and creativity, yet diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) remain areas where the industry must strive for greater progress. As a woman in science and technology, I have experienced firsthand both the challenges and the transformative power of mentorship and representation. Today, as a member of the Audio Engineering Society (AES) DEI Committee, I am committed to helping bridge these gaps for future generations.

A Journey Marked by Aspiration and Challenge

When I first stepped into the world of engineering, I was filled with ambition and excitement. However, it quickly became clear that the landscape was far from equitable. In research labs, conference rooms, and professional meetings, I was often one of the few, sometimes the only woman present. This underrepresentation was not just a matter of visibility; it translated into fewer mentorship opportunities, less access to informal networks, and more barriers to being recognized for technical contributions.

Despite these challenges, I found strength in perseverance. I focused on excelling in my research, culminating in a Ph.D. in Auditory Neuroscience, and contributing to projects that merged cognitive neuroscience with audio technology. These experiences were invaluable, but they also highlighted an essential truth: **talent needs mentorship and a supportive community to truly thrive.**

The Power of Mentorship

Mentorship has been a critical factor in my professional development. I was fortunate to find mentors who recognized my potential, encouraged my scientific curiosity, and championed my contributions in spaces where I might otherwise have been overlooked. Their guidance not only helped me grow technically but also instilled confidence to lead projects, present at major conferences, and advocate for myself and others.

Now, I view mentorship as a responsibility I proudly carry forward. In my roles including my time at Harman International developing biosignal-based hearing technologies or otherwise, I made it a point to mentor interns, early-career researchers, and women on platforms like Topmate and ADPlist entering the audio industry. It is deeply rewarding to see mentees gain skills, find their voices, and push the boundaries of innovation themselves.

Why Representation Matters

Representation is not about tokenism; it is about belonging. When individuals from diverse backgrounds see themselves reflected in leadership, research, and engineering roles, it signals that their voices matter and that their ideas are essential to shaping the future.

This belief drives my work within the AES DEI Committee. Our initiatives aim to create spaces where all members feel seen, supported, and empowered. From advocating for broader participation in AES conferences to promoting mentorship programs and editorial opportunities, our focus is on building lasting structures that promote equity in audio engineering.

Actionable Steps Forward

Real change requires collective action. Here are three steps we can all take:

1. **Prioritize Mentorship:** Senior engineers and researchers must actively mentor individuals from underrepresented groups, offering guidance and opening doors.
2. **Promote Inclusive Hiring and Leadership:** Organizations should commit to equitable hiring practices and ensure diverse voices are present at decision-making tables.
3. **Support DEI Initiatives:** Joining, volunteering for, or simply amplifying the work of DEI committees can help normalize inclusion as a core value of professional excellence.

A Future Worth Building

The journey toward true diversity, equity, and inclusion in audio engineering is ongoing. It requires intention, effort, and unwavering belief in the value that every individual brings to the field. Through mentorship, representation, and collective advocacy, we can build an industry that not only celebrates innovation but also honors the richness of diverse experiences.

I am proud to be part of this movement within the AES community. Together, by bridging gaps and lifting one another, we can create a more vibrant, inclusive, and inspiring future for all.



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