

## An Open Letter to CEOs

A few years ago, my dad was diagnosed with a benign brain tumor. Thankfully, he underwent successful surgery that restored the connections within his brain. Through this experience, I developed a fascination with neuroscience.

When I was looking into colleges, my parents told me I had a good chance of being accepted into STEM programs because fewer women were applying to these rigorous majors. It's not that females are any less capable but they're surrounded by an ideology that STEM isn't for them.

I might not have continued to pursue STEM if it hadn't been for my high school internship at Abbott. I worked alongside female scientists who showed me that nurturing my passion was far more important than ludicrous societal expectations. I was able to freely explore my interests without feeling insecure.

My internship gave me the confidence to continue STEM as a career path, but I realize I'm one of the fortunate few. These programs are sparse. That's why I'm reaching out for your help in creating an inclusive STEM internship program at your company.

Like the inner workings of the brain, the connections you create can lead to a better functioning society, where more young women in STEM are encouraged to become leaders.

Sincerely,

Helen R, Age 16  
Temecula, CA