



# Technical Entity TRENDS

## The Future of Chemical Engineering: AIChE's Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives

This column is the first in a series that explores how AIChE is shaping the future of chemical engineering.

Last year, the AIChE Board of Directors reimagined the Institute's vision and mission statements and developed a new aspirational statement. It reads: "To inspire a safe, connected, and inclusive community Doing a World of Good as: the global leader of the chemical engineering profession; the center for lifelong professional and personal growth; and the foremost catalyst in applying our expertise to sustainably meet societal needs." The first few words of the statement specifically highlight AIChE's commitment to an inclusive and integrated community of chemical and related engineers.

AIChE's diversity and inclusion (D&I) initiatives begin within the Societal Impact Operating Council (SIOC). Entities reporting to SIOC include the K-12 Committee, LGBTQ+ and Allies Initiative, Minority Affairs Committee (MAC), and Women in Chemical Engineering Committee (WIC), among others. Within AIChE, SIOC is leading efforts to define how chemical engineers can most effectively address societal needs.

If AIChE is to push the boundaries of chemical engineering, then we must broaden our appeal by attracting people from communities not typically drawn to the profession. This starts by introducing students to chemical engineering at a young age. Our K-12 Committee is helping girls and boys develop an interest in chemical engineering and build their confidence in their problem-solving skills — sparking a passion for engineering early in their lives.

The inaugural AIChE K-12 STEM Showcase was held in November 2019 at the Annual Meeting in Orlando, FL. At the showcase, students (along with their parents and educators) were introduced to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and interacted with STEM experiments being led by teams of AIChE members as part of the first AIChE K-12 STEM Outreach Competition.

After the resounding success of last year's event, AIChE plans to host the second K-12 STEM Showcase at the 2020 Annual Meeting. Learn more about the Outreach Competi-



◀ As part of the AIChE K-12 STEM Outreach Competition at the 2019 Annual Meeting, AIChE members engaged young students in the wonder of engineering and science through interactive experiments.

tion and join AIChE's K-12 community at [aiche.org/k12](http://aiche.org/k12). There, you can also access the K-12 Resource Database, which includes lesson plans for the experiments that won the 2019 Outreach Competition.

One of the foremost drivers of our D&I initiatives is the AIChE Foundation's Doing a World of Good Campaign. This campaign is focused chiefly on making positive impacts on society by attracting and retaining the best and brightest engineers, changing perceptions of chemical engineering, and championing education, training, and career development.

One of our key concerns is engaging underrepresented chemical engineers and retaining them in the field. To that end, the AIChE Foundation supports the Rising Star workshops and Leadership Equity programs to advance underrepresented engineers toward executive-level roles.

The Rising Star workshops empower and inspire women leaders in chemical engineering. At these events, notable speakers examine key issues through panel discussions. For example, at the December 2019 workshop, attendees discussed the confidence gap between women and men and the difficulty women encounter in establishing firm boundaries between work and home life. Attendees also networked and shared their stories through breakout groups. The next Rising Star workshop is set to take place in conjunction with AIChE's Spring Meeting in August.

AIChE's inaugural Leadership Equity program was attended by more than 40 senior engineers on Dec. 3, 2019, in New York City. This workshop helped attendees gain the tools and skills they will need to pursue executive-level roles in their organizations. For example, they learned how to create dynamic and high-performing teams, how to build credibility, and how to project an executive presence. The next Leadership Equity program is scheduled to take place in December 2020.

The AIChE Foundation is also funding the National Diversity Equity Workshop for Chemical Engineering Academic Leaders (NDEW), which will be held June 29–30 in Baltimore, MD. The two-day event will bring together department chairs to develop practical steps to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion in the academic sector. The centerpiece of the workshop is a series of breakout sessions to develop solutions collaboratively.

Encouraging diversity and inclusion promotes excellence in our profession. AIChE is shaping the future of chemical engineering by ensuring the next generation of engineers and C-suite executives represent all walks of life.

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