

An Open Letter to CEOs

My family and I first arrived in America from Nigeria when I was five. Being from a different country often had people questioning my intelligence and ability to succeed. So growing up, I found myself feeling incapable.

As I got older and started to gain an interest in STEM, pursuing it felt impossible. Besides being a person of color, I also had to combat the barriers of being a woman. In my STEM classes in high school, I was one of the few women in a class of 30. Even our guest speakers, were all male. It was hard to picture myself in a field where I saw no one who looked like me. At least, until I was a sophomore.

That's when I got into the STEM internship program at Abbott. Starting off, I had no idea if I was capable of being an engineering intern. However, I soon met my first ever female engineer, Kate, who took me under her wing. Her encouragement made me believe that one day, I could excel in this field.

There are so many other girls like me who could have amazing success in STEM, if only they had the chance to meet mentors like Kate. I am asking you to please create programs like this one within your company, so more girls who look like me can see what they can become.

Our society will only improve if diverse minds help lead the way.

Jomi B, Age 18
Maplewood, MN