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Drawing Women In: Engaging in Science and Engineering Disciplines

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Recent data on the participation of women in the scientific, technological, engineering, and mathematical (STEM) disciplines shows a landscape that is somewhat different from our expectations in the past. For example, women who earn bachelors' degrees in physics go on to earn PhDs, be hired to faculty positions, and achieve promotions at the same rate as their male counterparts. However, such gains do not foretell equal participation of women in physics since, although girls make up about half of high school physics classes, the fraction of bachelor's degrees earned by women has been flat at around 20% for about a decade. This remains true even with significantly increased awareness of the need to attract more women to STEM fields and despite various interventions to attract and retain talented women. This talk will present an overview of data on women's participation in STEM disciplines, provide possible explanations for the continued failure to attract women to some STEM fields, and give a brief description of some current interventions.