

APR21-2021-020027

Abstract for an Invited Paper
for the APR21 Meeting of
the American Physical Society

Empowering young women through role models and STEM education, and the unforeseen opportunities (and challenges) of virtual education¹

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Diversity in STEM fields in National Laboratories, Academia and Industry is highly impacted by societal stereotypes and bias. Empowering Under Represented Minorities (URM) and women to consider a future in STEM fields is critical in order to increase the diversity in workforce pipelines. Strategies need to be targeted to the specific needs of the communities to bring those that need that support the most. I will share the process followed to develop the Summer Physics Camp for Young Women in Northern New Mexico which in 2021 will deliver its 5th edition. This 2 week long program aims at empowering and increasing the STEM future aspirations of high school young women in Northern New Mexico through a variety of experiences which include: exposure to empowering female and male role models in STEM through a variety of hands on experiments, demonstrations and tours as well as exposure to local college opportunities, resources and information on National Laboratory Internships. The camp also teaches students the basics of successful job/internship CV writing and interviewing. This event also aims at impacting local public schools by partnering with educators who also get to participate providing a unique opportunity to personally engage with vibrant local STEM professionals in a very broad range of fields and activities that they can then bring to their classroom. The camp was converted to a virtual setting in 2020 due to COVID and with challenges we also realized new opportunities. At this time the 2021 Camp is being planned in a virtual setting open to the possibility for in person.

¹This program has been possible thanks to funding from APS minigrant program, Los Alamos National Laboratory and TRIAD, LANL Foundation, New Mexico Consortium, IEEE, Pojoaque Valley and Los Alamos Public schools as well as Athena Engineering scholars program.