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**The Association of Science-Technology Centers joins STEM Mentoring Initiative  
“Million Women Mentors”**  
*Partnership Seeks to Engage More Than One Million Girls and Young Women  
in STEM Education and Careers*

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Today the Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC) announced its partnership with the “Million Women Mentors” (MWM) initiative. MWM launched Jan. 8, 2014 during National Mentoring Month, at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. The initiative will support the engagement of 1 million science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) mentors—male and female—to increase the interest and confidence of girls and young women to pursue and succeed in STEM degrees and careers.

With more than 630 members in nearly 50 countries, ASTC is a global organization providing collective voice, professional support, and programming opportunities for science centers, museums, and related institutions. Today, these institutions, reaching 92 million visitors each year, have the opportunity to delve more deeply into science and, at the same time, dramatically heighten public awareness about the world we live in and the technological advances that are happening around us.

Creating hands-on experiences; showing students that STEM career options can be creative and enjoyable fields of endeavor; developing mentoring programs by enthusiastic workers in a particular STEM industry; and teaching in a lively manner can all go into the mix. ASTC witnesses first-hand the importance of using excitement, curiosity, discovery, wonder, joy, engagement, and fun to help make STEM subjects more engaging and appealing.

*“Science centers and museums are ideally positioned to be central players in supporting STEM career pathways for all youth – especially girls. They provide social STEM learning experiences that are tailored to the unique needs of their communities and offer excellent venues for bringing together a variety of STEM stakeholders dedicated to supporting the development of our future STEM workforce,” remarked Laura Huerta Migus, ASTC’s director of professional development and inclusion initiatives.*

In the past 10 years, growth in STEM jobs has been three times greater than that of non-STEM jobs. Today 80% of the fastest growing occupations in the United States depend on mastery of mathematics and knowledge and skills in hard sciences. While women comprise 48% of the U.S. workforce, just 24% are in STEM fields, a statistic that has held constant for nearly the last decade. While 75% of all college students are women and students of color, they represent only 45% of STEM degrees earned each year. Too many of these young women begin by pursuing STEM degrees but leave those degree paths despite their good academic standing, often citing uncomfortable classroom experiences and a disconcerting climate. Even when women earn a STEM degree, they are less likely than their male counterparts to work in a STEM field, even though STEM jobs pay more and have a lower wage gap: 92 cents on a dollar versus 75 cents in other fields.

ASTC is committed to contributing to the success of the MWM initiative. Beginning today, ASTC is launching a campaign to support the goals of Million Women Mentors, leveraging two powerful ASTC

programs—*Youth Inspired Challenge* and the *Girls RISEnet Project*. ASTC launched *Youth Inspired Challenge* in September 2010 inspired by President Obama, to expand the impact of science centers and museums on youth engagement in meaningful STEM experiences, and assist today's youth to become the innovative and creative thinkers needed for the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. Within the first two years, the program has surpassed its goals by engaging 75,000 youth in more than 2 million hours of STEM-centered programming in more than 100 science centers and museums around the world. *Girls RISEnet*, an NSF-funded partnership between the Phillip and Patricia Frost Museum of Science, ASTC and SECME, Inc., supports informal science educators in engaging middle school-aged girls, especially minority girls, in hands-on STEM experiences. More than 600 informal science educators across the country have gained mentoring skills through *Girls RISEnet* professional development workshops and mini-grants.

To become involved with ASTC or Million Women Mentors you can find more information by visiting [www.astc.org](http://www.astc.org) and [MillionWomenMentors.org](http://MillionWomenMentors.org).

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#### **About ASTC:**

The Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC) is a global organization providing collective voice, professional support, and programming opportunities for science centers, museums, and related institutions, whose innovative approaches to science learning inspire people of all ages about the wonders and the meaning of science in their lives. Through strategic alliances and global partnerships, ASTC strives to increase awareness of the valuable contributions its members make to their communities and the field of informal STEM learning. Founded in 1973, ASTC now represents over 650 members in nearly 50 countries, including not only science centers and museums, but also nature centers, aquariums, planetariums, zoos, botanical gardens, and natural history and children's museums, as well as companies, consultants, and other organizations that share an interest in informal science education. For more information about ASTC, or to find a science center near you, visit [www.astc.org](http://www.astc.org).

#### **About Million Women Mentors®(MWM):**

Million Women Mentors®(MWM) is a collective national campaign and program with the purpose of captivating one million mentors to link with one million girls and young professionals for their STEM careers. Through its efforts MWM works to showcase existing best practice and suggestions for the future. Utilizing a technology portal built in three phases and developed in collaboration with Tata Consultancy Services, MWM technology will enable mentor services for the nation. The MWM website and program launched January 8, 2014. The program is a collective effort of founding partners including 35 non-profits and major corporations and will also reach government agencies. MWM is an initiative of STEMconnector®, a company which works closely with corporations and other organizations to assist in corporate development, corporate structure and smart STEM investments

#### **About STEMconnector®:**

STEMconnector® is THE information resource and source of best practices – The one-stop for Who's Doing What in STEM Education and STEM jobs. STEMconnector®'s web site contains 6,500 profiles of stakeholders in STEM Education. STEMconnector® purpose is to map STEM activity of organizations, government, private sector, education, associations, diversity and women. STEMconnector® overall works through collaboration with its members and partners. Members are in all sectors. STEM Council meetings are offered three times a year to members and these are business, government, education and non-profits.