WOMEN IN STEM

CUSTOM CONTENT • June 3, 2024

Women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) have long been trailblazers, challenging gender norms and making remarkable strides in diverse fields. Historical figures like

Ada Lovelace, the world's first computer programmer, paved the way for contemporary innovators. Women like Dr. Fei-Fei Li in artificial intelligence and Dr. Jane Goodall in primatology continue to shape their respective fields today. Despite progress, gender disparities persist, highlighting the importance of promoting STEM education for girls and fostering an inclusive environment.

Embracing diverse perspectives in STEM not only champions equality but also unlocks untapped potential, driving innovation and progress.

These 42 women exemplify the diverse opportunities and significant impact that women can have in STEM fields within Orange County. Through education, research, leadership, and community outreach, they are helping to pave the way for future generations of women in STEM.

METHODOLOGY: The honorees did not pay to be included. The profiles were chosen from the nomination materials submitted. This list is not comprehensive and includes only executives for whom nominations were submitted and accepted after an editorial review. Honorees are listed alphabetically.

WOMEN IN STEM

SALEM AFEWORKI

Energy and Sustainability Services Manager
City of Costa Mesa

- Executive Certificate Climate Change Science and Solutions, MIT
- Certificate in Sustainable Environmental Management UC Berkeley
- MS, Environmental Management & Auditing, specialized in Renewable Energy, Universidad de Leon, Spain
- BA, Journalism and Communication, University of Asmara, Eritrea

Salem Afeworki LEED GA, ENV SP, EcoDistricts AP is a seasoned sustainability leader who is passionate about making a positive impact locally and globally. Afeworki is the first energy and sustainability services manager for the City of Costa Mesa and is responsible for developing and implementing sustainability programs citywide. Before joining the city, she founded Value Sustainability, a boutique consultancy that specializes in climate change and community engagement services. Afeworki has also worked in multidisciplinary settings for organizations such as the United Nations, KPMG and Jacobs Engineering in four continents - allowing her to cultivate inclusive and diverse thinking, interactions and attributes.

Her latest contribution to STEM is the publication of the '2023 State of Sustainability Report' that covers Orange County and Los Angeles area. The report was developed in collaboration with members of American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) local chapter, and it details sustainability related challenges and opportunities in the region.

GYLA BELL

Vice President, Programs
TGR Foundation

-ESL Specialist Licensure, University of Minnesota
-Reading Specialist Licensure, Hamline University
-Masters of Science: Education, California State University, Fullerton
-Multiple Subject Teaching Credential, University of California, Riverside
-Bachelors of Science: Psychobiology, University of California, Riverside

Gyla Bell has dedicated her career to empowering youth through education in and outside of the classroom. In addition to leading STEM programs at TGR Foundation's flagship TGR Learning Lab Anaheim since its opening in 2006, she has served students and families throughout her career as a teacher, administrator and leader. Bell is currently the vice president of programs at TGR Foundation, where she leads programs and operations of the TGR Learning Lab Anaheim and satellite programs in Florida, Philadelphia and the Marine Corps Base in Quantico, Virginia.

Bell has also established and maintained strategic partnerships to provide opportunities for students from under-resourced communities. To date, the TGR Learning Lab has served nearly 200,000 students in Orange County and beyond through innovative STEM-based education programs and reaches more than 5,000 Orange County students annually. With an emphasis on introducing students to STEM subjects and relevant careers, Bell has supported the development of its school day program exposing 5th and 6th graders to forensic science, biotechnology and marine biology.

JASMINA "JASS" BROOKS

President
Biosense Webster, part of J&J MedTech

-BS in Biomedical Engineering, Louisiana Tech University

With nearly 25 years of experience in the cardiovascular field, Jasmina "Jass" Brooks has dedicated her career to championing excellence in patient outcomes and solving unmet medical needs. As a well-respected, collaborative leader with a deep knowledge of the electrophysiology space, she has a proven track record of successfully driving growth and market leadership, as well as a deep commitment to developing talent and fostering a culture of collaboration and inclusivity in the workplace.

In May of 2023, Brooks was appointed to president of Biosense Webster, part of Johnson & Johnson MedTech and a global leader in the science, diagnosis, and treatment of heart rhythm disorders. In her new role, she oversees operations to deliver record growth and meet unmet needs in cardiac ablation for customers and patients around the world. Under her leadership, Biosense Webster delivered 26% growth in Q1 2024, and continues to be the #1 global market leader in the electrophysiology space and a key growth driver for Johnson & Johnson MedTech.

Prior to this role, Brooks was at Bionsense Webster for nine years, most recently as vice president, Global Strategic Marketing where she worked with cross-functional and international teams to develop strategies and shape the company product pipeline to drive growth, market share, and profitability. She also spent 15 years at GE Healthcare in commercial marketing, global strategic marketing, product development and engineering in the US and EMEA.

STACEY CHARTIER-GRABLE

Executive Director
OC Habitats

-Bachelor of Art degree in Business: California State University, San Bernardino
-Master's of Science degree in Environmental Studies: California State University, Fullerton

Stacey Chartier-Grable founded OC Habitats in 2017 with the goal of habitat and species conservation. She has built this grassroots nonprofit from a seven-volunteer team to a five-paid staff and hundred+ volunteer team that has contributed to education, restoration, monitoring, volunteering, and internship programs throughout the county. Her goal is to reach as many people and educate them about our environment and the importance of protecting it. She has put a strong focus on Title 1 programs in the local schools as well as providing programs to the public through monthly talks and guided hikes in and around Orange County, CA. She has developed a strong internship program with local colleges and some high schools to help students get acquainted with and gain experience in the conservation field.

She has made great connections and relationships with like-minded organizations, which has led to many partnerships throughout the years. Her restoration and monitoring work has provided direct benefit to our local ecosystems, especially our local wetlands, beaches, and riparian habitats, in clean-up, invasive removal, planting, and species monitoring. Based on input from partners, interns, volunteers, and staff, Chartier-Grable has made an impact in Orange County by providing a diverse, educational, and positive place for people to learn and help protect the planet.

JULIANNE CHOY

Mechanical Engineer
Terran Orbital

-BS Mechanical Engineering from CalTech
-MS Mechanical Engineering from Stanford

Julianne (Joules) Choy, a senior mechanical engineer at Terran Orbital, exemplifies leadership and expertise in both her technical role and community engagement. As a key figure in Terran WISE (Women in Space and Engineering), Choy champions the advancement of women in aerospace and engineering fields. Her active participation as both a mentor and a mentee in WISE illustrates her commitment to continuous learning and support within the community.

In her engineering capacity, Choy plays a critical role in developing innovative solutions for spacecraft design and deployment. Her technical acumen and problem-solving skills ensure that projects meet the high standards necessary for space missions, enhancing Terran Orbital's capabilities in the aerospace sector. Her ability to blend detailed engineering work with effective team collaboration makes her a pivotal member of the Terran Orbital team.

Additionally, Choy's leadership extends to organizing impactful company events, such as the International Women's Day celebration, which promotes an inclusive culture through shared stories and experiences under the theme #InspireInclusion. She also authored 'Taylor's Toy,' a children's book that introduces young readers to the engineering design process, further demonstrating her dedication to STEM outreach and education. Through these efforts, Choy significantly contributes to both Terran Orbital's mission and its community-oriented initiatives.

KIMBERLY EDWARDS

Professor of Teaching
University of California Irvine

-UC Irvine, Ph.D., Chemistry
-UC Irvine, B.S., Chemistry and Biology

Kimberly Edwards, Professor of Teaching in Chemistry at UC Irvine, has dedicated her career to providing high quality laboratory experiences for students at all levels. Professor Edwards has revolutionized the general chemistry laboratory curriculum at UC Irvine by creating courses based in Argument Driven Inquiry (ADI). Students in an ADI course are first introduced to an experimental technique through a traditional lab procedure. Then student teams use their understanding of the technique to gather evidence to answer an inquiry-based question by designing their own experimental procedures. Student teams analyze data together, create claims based on their evidence, and engage in an argumentation session in which they compare experimental procedures, results, claims, and evidence with other student teams. ADI lab courses introduce students to how science is done.

In addition to her teaching role, Professor Edwards is the UCI campus liaison for the OC Regional Science Olympiad. In this role she created a course in which UCI undergraduate students use their scientific knowledge and experience to write, proctor and score events for the Science Olympiad. Professor Edwards' dedication to the success of this enormous event has ensured that students throughout the OC area take part in an engaging and successful Science Olympiad on the UCI campus each year.

WOMEN IN STEM

NIKKI FORD

Sr. Director of Nutrition
Hass Avocado Board's Avocado Nutrition Center

-University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Ph.D, Nutritional Science
-Penn State University B.S, Animal Bioscience

Nikki Ford, Ph.D., is a trailblazer in nutrition and a vital asset to the Hass Avocado Board as senior director of Nutrition. With unwavering dedication, Dr. Ford leads initiatives at the Avocado Nutrition Center, solidifying its authority on avocado health science. Her efforts advance research and equip scientists, healthcare professionals, and policymakers with accurate information, impacting people's lives and wellness.

Under Dr. Ford's astute leadership, the Hass Avocado Board has funded 44 pivotal clinical and observational studies across cardiovascular health, diabetes, weight management, and healthy living. Conducted by top institutions, these studies are published in peer-reviewed journals, contributing significantly to the body of scientific literature surrounding avocados' nutritional benefits. This science-based program informs public health policies and dietary guidelines, ensuring that evidence-based information reaches the hands of healthcare professionals and consumers alike.

Moreover, Dr. Ford's commitment to advancing the field extends beyond her role at the Avocado Nutrition Center. Her service on the board of the Foundation for Fresh Produce underscores her dedication to promoting health and wellness beyond avocado research.
Dr. Ford's contributions to nutrition science are profound, shaping the landscape of evidence-based dietary recommendations and empowering individuals to make informed choices for their health.

LAURA FORD

President
Pollinator Protection Fund

-JD Law Honors - Anglia Ruskin University - United Kingdom.
Major: Environmental Law

Laura Ford founded the Pollinator Protection Fund in 2021 in California after learning about the drastic decline of the Western Monarch Butterfly. Ford has applied huge amounts of energy and creativity to engage with local municipal governments, homeowners' associations, private land owners, federal and state government agencies, non-profits and members of the public.

In the space of two years, Ford has raised over $150,000 and has created 10 thriving pollinator gardens, rich with plant and insect biodiversity. These gardens are situated in numerous communities along a 140-mile stretch of the California coast. The gardens have bright and uplifting educational signage in both English and Spanish. Ford designed and created all content for the signs - which includes suggestions of what people can do in their own daily lives to help pollinators.

By researching and attending seminars, working with local experts, attending zoom calls with plant biologists and botanists and becoming an accredited Pollinator Steward, Ford has gained a wealth of knowledge which she shares in the educational presentations she gives to community groups.

STEPHENIE GODDARD

CEO
Glidewell

-Bachelors of Science, Psychology and Human Development - Cal Poly, SLO
-Masters of Science, Industrial/Organization Psychology - San Jose State University

Stephenie Goddard's innovative leadership has propelled the organization to technological breakthroughs, establishing her as a trailblazer in STEM, deserving recognition for driving technological progress in dental industry. A notable achievement under Goddard's leadership is the establishment of the Glidewell International Technology Center, a pivotal hub for dental education, innovation, and R&D; establishment of groundbreaking technologies like the glidewell.io In-Office Solution, chairside milling and same-day dentistry. Her strategic incorporation of CrownAI and MarginAI technologies into fastdesign.io software demonstrates her foresight in leveraging artificial intelligence for enhanced patient care.

Furthermore, Goddard's leadership has fostered the development of cutting-edge products like the Comfort3D Bite Splint, utilizing digital design and 3D printing. Collaborations with industry leaders such as Medit and LuxCreo have yielded state-of-the-art scanning and 3D printing solutions. Her strategic acquisition of ORB Innovations enriched Glidewell with innovative technologies for smart performance tracking. Goddard has championed operational excellence through initiatives like VOIP-based call centers and proprietary customer relationship management systems. Under her guidance, the organization has successfully transitioned from analog to digital restoration manufacturing.

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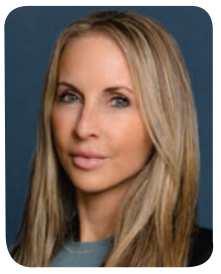
JILL GOODWIN



Chief Operating Officer
Axis Research & Technologies

-University of California, Irvine - BA in Social Ecology

As the chief operating officer at Axis Research & Technologies, Jill Goodwin has successfully aided with the company's expansion into new, ultramodern lab facilities. This growth has introduced the bioskills company to new audiences in Columbia, Maryland and Nashville, Tennessee, in addition to its headquarters in Irvine, CA. With several new locations to open this year, each elite Axis location supports medical device research and training, giving medical device manufacturers access to state-of-the-art, fully configurable rooms for didactic trainings, wet labs, lunch and learns and more. With Goodwin's leadership, Axis's engaged, highly trained and motivated team anticipates the needs of its top healthcare brand clients that rely on Axis' pre-clinical training research and technologically-advanced lab facilities.

Goodwin has also worked with leading healthcare technologists and medical pioneers to create and introduce OMNIMED® SmartOR, an intelligent, data-driven solution that provides a holistic view into the surgical environment, bringing a new dimension to healthcare and ushering in the smart operating room of the future.

While leading the charge to help better improve the medical industry through the two companies, Axis and OMNIMED, Goodwin actively contributes to the advancement of medical breakthroughs for all.

RENELL GOTVALD-GOCHMAN

Director, Clinical Laboratories
City of Hope Orange County

-Chapman University, MBA
-Saint Cloud State University, Bachelor of Science, Medical Technology
Minor in Chemistry

Renell A. Gochman, M.B.A., MT(ASCP), CLS, PMP, brings more than 25 years of expertise in healthcare ancillary, clinical and support services operations to her role as director of Clinical Laboratories at City of Hope Orange County.

She is responsible for the overall laboratory operations at City of Hope Orange County Lennar Foundation Cancer Center, City of Hope Seacliff, and will oversee laboratory operations at Orange County's only specialty cancer hospital, opening in 2025.

Gochman, who earned her MBA from Chapman University and her Bachelor of Science degree in medical technology with a chemistry minor from Saint Cloud University, began her career as a clinical laboratory scientist. She has held progressive leadership responsibility for laboratory management in hospitals and clinical laboratories ever since, overseeing operations in laboratories of various sizes, ensuring rigorous regulatory compliance, fostering collaborative teamwork, and streamlining processes.

Gochman held laboratory leadership operations positions at Dignity Health-St. Mary Medical Center, MemorialCare, Long Beach Community Hospital and other providers. Deeply committed to training the next generation of laboratory medicine scientists, she implemented clinical laboratory internship programs at Long Beach Memorial Medical Center and St. Mary.

SARAH GRACK

Director of Innovation
St. John's Lutheran School

-Concordia University Wisconsin, BA
-Concordia University Irvine, MA

As the director of innovation and technology at St. John's Lutheran, Sarah Grack has consistently demonstrated a remarkable commitment to advancing STEM fields through her innovative instruction and influential instructional coaching contributions. Her work in 3D printing, design, and coding in Kindergarten through 8th grade has not only pushed the boundaries of excellent teaching but has also paved the way for practical applications that benefit student learning long-term.

Beyond her exceptional educational endeavors, Grack is deeply passionate about promoting learning engagement and STEM careers. She actively mentors aspiring teachers and students, inspiring them to pursue their ambitions in STEM.

Moreover, Grack's leadership extends beyond the classroom. She is a vocal advocate for STEM education and regularly engages with Apple education initiatives aimed at fostering the next generation of STEM teacher leaders. She exemplified this with her leadership of St. John's to become an Apple Distinguished School.

AMANDA HOLTON

Professor of Teaching
University of California, Irvine

-UC Irvine, Ph.D., Chemistry
-Saginaw Valley State University, B.S., Chemistry

Amanda Holton, professor of Teaching in Chemistry at UC Irvine, creates innovative courses that provide solid foundations to future scientists, engineers, and medical professionals. Professor Holton created a pedagogically sound and engaging full-year series of online general chemistry courses designed to provide students with flexibility in their course scheduling. Professor Holton's early experiences teaching online courses proved invaluable to many colleagues in the 2020 emergency pivot to remote courses. Large general chemistry lecture courses are often deemed "gatekeeper" courses, and students who struggle in general chemistry are often pushed out of STEM majors. To address equity concerns in this course series, Professor Holton designed "General Chemistry Plus," a course offered concurrently with general chemistry to assist students who may struggle initially with their college-level chemistry.

Professor Holton drew on her extensive experience as a nationally-recognized expert in using flipped classroom approaches in large chemistry courses and the state of the art classrooms in UCI's Anteater Learning Pavillion to make "General Chemistry Plus" a fully active learning experience for students who work with peers to build problem solving skills with direct assistance from a professor and graduate student assistants. Professor Holton meets students at their existing chemistry skill levels and provides a supportive environment to support their success.

ANNE HULTGREN

Executive Director & CEO
Arnold and Mabel Beckman Foundation

-BA in Physics with a minor in Math from Franklin and Marshall College
-PhD in Physics and Astronomy from Johns Hopkins University

Dr. Hultgren began her career in research grantmaking and program management within the Federal government, developing new technologies for rapid detection of potential biological threats. Her projects included large-scale technology testbeds that reduced detection time for biothreats from days to minutes. Dr. Hultgren's responsibilities progressed from program manager with a $20 million portfolio, to branch chief for chem/bio detection technologies, to division director overseeing a $120 million annual budget for programs across the spectrum of chem/bio threat awareness, characterization, detection, and remediation. In 2015, Dr. Hultgren joined the Arnold and Mabel Beckman Foundation, an Irvine-based nonprofit, as CEO & executive director. Dr. Hultgren brings her commitment to transparent, fair, and ethical grantmaking to the Foundation's mission to support young, innovative scientists across the U.S. Under Dr. Hultgren's leadership, the Foundation's endowment has grown 22% and provided over $300 million in grants nationally. She has cultivated partnerships with Orange County organizations that provide youth STEM activities to inspire the next generation of scientists, including OC Science and Engineering Fair, Irvine Public Schools Foundation, KidsatScience, DiscoveryCube, and Segerstrom Center for Arts, with over $2.5 million in direct support. Recently, Dr. Hultgren published an 8-year peer-reviewed study eLife on grantmaking practices showing that blinded application reviews reduce implicit bias.

MITA JETHWANI

Founding Dentist
Trooth & Smiles

-Nair Hospital Dental College, Mumbai - Bachelor of Dental Science
-UCLA, Preceptorship
-UCLA, Doctorate of Dental Surgery
-UCLA, Special Patient Care Residency

Dr. Mita Jethwani is highly accomplished in the STEM fields of Biology and Medicine. She takes her advanced healthcare knowledge and applies it for her patients to provide them with a superior dental experience and dental education in Orange County. At UCLA, Dr. Mita trained in oral healthcare for Medically compromised patients (including but not limited to cancer, HIV+, and patients on the autism spectrum). After completing her residency, she continued at UCLA as a Clinical Educator in the Special Patient Care program, educating the next generation of dentists on how to care for medically complex patients.

Dr. Mita is a gifted educator and a passionate patient advocate. She translates her advanced clinical knowledge into understandable terms for her patients. Dr. Mita has built a reputation for her all-inclusive approach to dentistry and focusing on the mouth/body connection. She has treated over 1,500 patients in since 2022 at her practice, Trooth & Smiles, providing compassionate patient-first care.

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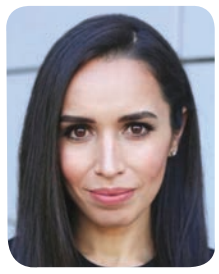
MARISA JIMENEZ



VP, Manufacturing
Terran Orbital

-BS in systems and industrial engineering from San Jose State University
-MS in Engineering Management from Drexel University

Marisa Jimenez, vice president of Manufacturing at Terran Orbital, isn't just a leader; she's an empowering force. A champion for the Terran WISE (Women in Space and Engineering) affinity group at Terran Orbital, Jimenez ensures women's voices are heard and contributions celebrated. As a servant leader, Jimenez prioritizes the well-being of her team, recognizing that their successes are integral to the success of their programs. Her leadership is defined by her commitment to fostering a supportive environment where each team member can thrive.

Recently, Jimenez was even recognized by the Greater Irvine Chamber's '40 Under 40 List' for her leadership making strides in the manufacturing industry. Jimenez's dedication extends beyond the traditional boundaries of leadership. She embodies a holistic approach that recognizes the importance of both professional and personal growth for her team. By nurturing a culture of empowerment and collaboration, Jimenez ensures that our manufacturing division operates at its fullest potential, fueling Terran Orbital's success in space exploration and beyond.

KATIE KALVODA

Founder
Advance OC

-BA, Economics, University of CA Berkeley
-Artificial Intelligence Certification, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Katie Kalvoda is the inspirational founder of Advance OC, a nonprofit with a mission to close social and health disparities through the power of data. The organization achieves its objectives by fostering multi-sector partnerships, utilizing state-of-the-art data science, engaging in dynamic storytelling, and designing innovative programs to address community issues.

One of Kalvoda's notable achievements is the development of the Orange County Equity Map, an award-winning, pioneering tool recognized by the Southern California Association of Governments, CA Pan-Ethnic Health Network, Governing Magazine, and the Chronicle of Philanthropy. Additionally, Kalvoda led the creation of the COVID Vulnerability Map, a predictive model used by the Orange County Health Care Agency to identify neighborhoods at risk based on comorbidity risk factors and social determinants of health. This tool was instrumental in helping Orange County become the first medium-to-large size county to achieve Yellow Tier status. Her pioneering work has been hailed as "truly revolutionary" by the American Academy of Pediatrics and adopted in various other regions and sectors in the U.S., positioning Advance OC as a leader in healthcare innovation and data science.

TARYN KJOLSING

Engineering Manager
South Coast Water District

-Master's of Science, Civil Engineering - San Diego State University
-Bachelor's of Science, Structural Engineering - University of California, San Diego

Taryn Kjolsing is responsible for managing the South Coast Water District's (District) Engineering and Recycled Water/Conservation Departments. She has successfully managed an extensive Capital Improvement Program averaging nearly $40 million per year since she started at the District six years ago. Her most recent significant career accomplishment includes overseeing the final completion of the District's $100 million Tunnel Stabilization and Sewer Pipeline Replacement Project which the District began planning for in 2010. This capital wastewater infrastructure project, which was originally constructed in 1954, enlarged the existing 2-mile tunnel and installed a new 24-inch pipeline located approximately 100 feet below ground along the cliffs of Laguna Beach. Construction of this project was completed in early 2024 and will provide a 100-year solution to protect the environment, local economies, and the community.

Ms. Kjolsing is also the project manager for an approximately $40 million project to replace a critical sewer lift station located in Laguna Beach. This lift station was built in the early 1950s and needs major repair and modernization. Ms. Kjolsing has been managing this project since its inception in 2018, successfully obtaining permits from the City of Laguna Beach and the California Coastal Commission, which allowed construction to begin in May 2023.

SHARON R. KLEIN

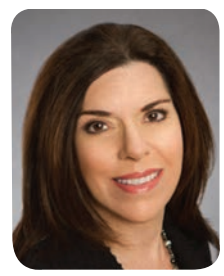
Partner and Co-Chair, Privacy, Security & Data Protection Practice; Office Managing Partner Orange County Office
Blank Rome LLP

-Temple University Beasley School of Law, JD
-Syracuse University, BA, summa cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa

Sharon Klein is a nationally recognized leader in data privacy and cybersecurity law. Cybersecurity risk and legislation are rapidly evolving globally. In 2023, ransomware affected 72 percent of businesses, costing more than $20 billion a year. Klein ensures that her business clients minimize their risks, comply with regulations, and avoid cyberattacks and breaches while leveraging the value of data. Klein has more than 40 years' experience as a thought leader and problem solver in data privacy, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and complex technology transactions, including 12 years as associate general counsel at Siemens Medical Solutions USA.

Klein has a stellar track record of resolving clients' legal issues related to ransomware and other data breaches. She is handling a significant data breach for a global software as a service ("SaaS") company, which allegedly compromised millions of data subjects' personal information. She has counseled her clients in attorney general regulatory investigations in every state and before federal consumer protection regulators, advised clients on data breach litigation including class action lawsuits, and has worked extensively with the FBI and law enforcement on individual client matters and public policy initiatives to strengthen the nation's cybersecurity infrastructure.

LEE ANN KLINE



President & Founder
STEM Advantage

-B.S. Mathematics and Computer Science, Juniata College
-MBA from The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania

Lee Ann Kline began her career as a programmer at IBM. As a Mathematics and Computer Science major, she was keenly aware of the lack of women in her field and the need for role models. As her career progressed and she became a consultant at EY, she observed firsthand the lack of gender and racial diversity in the technology organizations she served.

See something. Do something. Inspired to create change, in 2012 Kline leveraged her network to create STEM Advantage, a 501c3 nonprofit, to advance equity through education and career development.

Talent is equally distributed, but opportunity is not. STEM Advantage mentors, prepares and inspires women and underserved communities, primarily first-generation college students from low-income families, for STEM careers. A holistic program for STEM Advantage Scholars includes internships, mentors, scholarships, professional and career development, and community. They serve students earning a bachelor's degree at eight California State University campuses in Southern California. Scholars say the program is "life changing" as it benefits students, their families and communities. They "pay it forward" as role models and mentors for younger students.

AMRITA KRISHNAN

Executive Medical Director, Hematology, City of Hope Orange County and Director, Judy and Bernard Briskin Center for Multiple Myeloma Research, City of Hope
City of Hope Orange County

-Albany Medical College, M.D.
-Union College, B.S.
-Dr. Krishnan trained at The University of Rochester, Beth Israel Hospital, Fred Hutchinson Research Cancer Center and Dana Farber Cancer Institute.

Amrita Krishnan, M.D., FACP, executive medical director of Hematology, City of Hope Orange County and director, Judy and Bernard Briskin Center for Multiple Myeloma Research, City of Hope, is an internationally renowned physician-scientist who has turned multiple myeloma, a blood cancer, into one of the most promising areas for cancer research.

Her work has led to significant increases in survival. She defines the role of optimal therapies after stem cell transplant and leads trials of new therapies. She has been instrumental in leading "first in human" trials of myeloma drugs, leading to FDA approval of four of them. These accomplishments are the latest in a lifetime of innovation. She was instrumental in bringing transplant therapy to HIV patients with lymphoma who had been denied transplant due to their HIV status. This work led to a national study; HIV is no longer an exclusion for hematopoietic cell transplantation.

Dr. Krishnan is currently involved in investigating three promising new bispecific antibodies for use in multiple myeloma that has come back after treatment or stopped responding to treatment. By pinpointing genetic vulnerabilities in cancer cells and harnessing the power of the immune system to attack those cells, bispecific antibody treatment has the potential to defeat multiple myeloma.

WOMEN IN STEM

CHRISTY LEA

Partner
Knobbe Martens

-University of Texas School of Law (J.D., 2000)
-University of Mississippi (B.S. Chemical Engineering, 1997)

A star litigation partner at Knobbe Martens and co-chair of its Medical Device Litigation practice, Christy Lea resolves high-stakes patent and trade secret disputes at both the trial and appellate levels. Ms. Lea has represented clients in medical device and other industries for well over two decades, serving as lead counsel in numerous high-impact patent litigation disputes.

In just the last year, Ms. Lea has defended Edwards Lifesciences and its patient-focused medical innovations in multiple litigation cases. When sued by Aortic Innovations and wrongly accused of infringing four patents related to its transcatheter aortic valve replacement (TAVR) technology, Ms. Lea and her team successfully convinced the court that Edwards' technology was not covered by any of the four patents. When Meril Lifesciences imported a copycat version of Edwards' TAVR tech, Ms. Lea and team pursued patent infringement, false advertising, and trademark infringement claims.

Ms. Lea has also had significant success in trials for Edwards and other clients where judges and jurors appreciate her straightforward approach to explaining even the most sophisticated technologies. She previously won and collected over $120 million for Edwards following a trade secret jury trial. More recently, she achieved a complete defense jury verdict for another client.

SARAH LIANG

EY Consulting Partner
EY

-UCLA

With over 20 years of experience at EY serving global and Fortune 500 companies, Sarah Liang has demonstrated passion in building a better working world both internally within the firm, particularly more recently in her leadership in guiding companies through the acceptance, integration, and governance of AI.

At EY, Liang is a speaker and leader on AI topics including governance and responsible AI. She also leads clients on the required business transformations in preparation for successful initial public offerings (IPOs) including finance strategy, IT strategy, controls over financial reporting (including systems), and internal audit setup and design.

Liang enhances client enterprise risk management by implementing controls related to information technology needs such as cloud strategy, cloud migration, digital readiness, microservices, security, privacy, and governance. In addition, she leads digital/automation transformations to enhance operation and compliance for both EY and our clients.

RENEE LINK

Professor of Teaching
University of California at Irvine

-Ph.D. Chemistry, University of California, Irvine
-B.S. Chemistry, University of California, San Diego

Renee Link, chemistry professor at UC Irvine, is a leader in the development and implementation of innovative teaching methodologies. Her commitment to student-centered active learning has revolutionized chemistry classrooms. Through presentations and publications, Dr. Link empowers educators nationwide to implement their own pedagogical techniques, most significantly specifications grading in a giant organic chemistry laboratory course. This research-based grading method focuses on competency and master standards rather than points to redirect focus to learning instead of grades.

Not content with merely transforming her own classroom, Dr. Link played a pivotal role in establishing and administering the Teaching Experiment Academy. The community draws participants from UCI, San Jose State and Cal Poly Pomona serving as a catalyst for pedagogical innovation. Here, educators are equipped to revitalize their courses via active learning and specifications grading. Through her mentorships of faculty, Dr. Link's impact extends beyond her classroom as she has spread evidence-based techniques which help thousands of students each year. Her dedication to mentoring ensures these transformative methods are not only adopted in her at UCI, but that mentees disseminate their own work, exponentially reaching other universities, faculty and students.

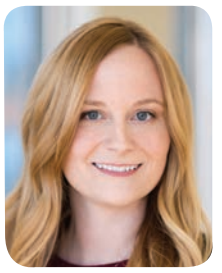
YEN-LING LIU

Senior Research Scientist
REGENESIS

- PhD in Civil Engineering from the Ohio State University
-Masters in Environmental Engineering from National Taiwan University
-BS degree in Bioenvironmental Systems Engineering from National Taiwan University

Dr. Liu's scientific publications, which have garnered over 500 citations, stand as a testament to the impact and relevance of her research in the field of environmental engineering. Dr. Liu specializes in the development and improvement of new and existing technologies to remediate environmental contaminants such as per- and polyfluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS), also known as "forever chemicals" because of their widespread persistence in our drinking water and the environment, and adverse health effects. Before joining Regenesis, Dr. Liu was a postdoctoral researcher affiliated with North Carolina University's PFAS testing network, where she developed her expertise in the management and study of PFAS in the environment. Dr. Liu conceptualized and designed SourceStop, a new technology that uses a proprietary or liquid form of activated carbon to hold PFAS in the ground, which prevents the spread to nearby communities and drinking water wells and protects our health. This technology employs a site-specific design and can be combined with in situ plume treatment for guaranteed risk elimination, which ultimately keeps groundwater cleaner and humans safer. Dr. Liu's idea for SourceStop was sparked because she is always observing, thinking, and making connections. Her creativity and scientific leadership paved the way for the development of this much-needed technology in the treatment of a globally important area, the protection of groundwater, water bodies and aquatic environments.

KENDALL LOEBBAKA



Partner
Knobbe Martens

-University of Notre Dame Law School (J.D., 2012)
-California Polytechnic State University - San Luis Obispo (B.S. Electrical Engineering, 2009)

Kendall Loebbaka is a rapidly rising star in the Orange County legal community. With an electrical engineering background, she's been involved in some of Knobbe Martens' most complex tech cases, including playing a key role on the team that represented longtime firm client Masimo Corp. in the Apple Watch patent infringement case that resulted in an import ban on the infringing models. The watches, introduced during the pandemic, included a "blood oxygen" feature to measure oxygen saturation. In October 2023, the U.S. International Trade Commission found that the Apple Watch infringes Masimo patents on technology for measuring oxygen in the blood owned by Masimo. The ITC issued a limited exclusion order and cease and desist order banning Apple Watches with the blood oxygen feature. Since January 2024, Apple Watches imported into the U.S. no longer measure blood oxygen.

This work is indicative of Ms. Loebbaka's standout strengths and technical knowledge that she brings to her IP litigation practice, and just a recent example in a string of notable roles she's played in other tech cases at the firm. Her foundation in STEM enables her to handle disputes involving a wide array of technologies and products for clients in cutting-edge industries.

ANGELA MORAN

Chief Information Officer
Orange County's Credit Union

-San Diego State University, Bachelor of Science, Psychology
-Project Management Professional (PMP)

Since becoming the chief information officer at Orange County's Credit Union, Angela Moran has led with strategy, innovation and efficiency. She cultivated a five-year IT strategic roadmap, focusing on digital transformation, emerging technology, and operational excellence. Moran reorganized the IT department in 2021, aligning it with corporate objectives. In order to support long-term digital transformation, she launched the first IT Internship Program to ensure a perpetual talent pipeline. Recognizing gaps in key processes, Moran implemented capacity management tools, established Portfolio/Project Governance, and instituted the Architectural Review Board. The adoption of the Agile methodology expedited project delivery, with 19 IT projects finalized in 2023, a notable increase from the previous average of eight.

Moran's technological vision is equally bold. Spearheading AI-driven endeavors, leveraging algorithms to uncover creditworthy borrowers, and introducing "Hal," an AI Chatbot enhancing consumer loan services. These initiatives have proven to amplify productivity and boost member satisfaction.

WOMEN IN STEM

MARIE NYDAM

Associate Professor of Biology
Soka University of America

-Ph.D. Evolutionary Biology, Cornell University
-B.S. Evolution and Ecology, UC Davis

Dr. Marie Nydam is an associate professor of Biology at Soka University of America in Aliso Viejo. She is an expert on marine invertebrates known as ascidians or “sea squirts”. She focuses on globally introduced ascidian species that disrupt coastal ecosystems and foul boats and aquaculture facilities. Dr. Nydam is an author of 17 scientific research articles, many with student co-authors. She has mentored over 20 female STEM students during her career researching and teaching at Liberal Arts Universities. She is a co-editor of a special issue of the journal genesis, entitled “Women in Tunicate Biology,” for which she additionally wrote two articles celebrating female scientists’ contributions to the field. She is the current recipient of a National Science Foundation grant to study introduced ascidians in coral reef and mangrove habitats in the Caribbean.

ANOOSHEH OSKOUIAN

President and CEO
Ship & Shore Environmental, Inc.

-University of Colorado Denver, Bachelor of Science, Chemical Engineering

Anoosheh Oskouian is a leader in the environmental industry, and a first in many professional endeavors, setting new standards, implementing new ideas, and constantly thinking of ways to offer innovative solutions for clean air. As a result, Ship & Shore has received numerous awards and has been recognized for many clean air and sustainability initiatives.

Serving as a Best Available Control Technology (BACT) committee member of Southern California Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD), Oskouian has helped with the development of rules and regulations for the industry. In an effort to plant seeds and educate the young engineers, Oskouian is also a member of UC Irvine’s School of Physical Sciences Dean Leadership Council and the UC Irvine’s Executive Roundtable and has been a regular guest speaker at UC Irvine and California State Polytechnic University.

Anoosheh Oskouian has been featured in several renowned publications including The Los Angeles Times, CNN Money, Bloomberg, Plastics News, Los Angeles Business Journal, and more. In 2015, she was esteemed the Ellis Island Medal of Honor. In 2017, she was named National Association of Women Business Owner (NAWBO) “Business Owner of the Year” and was voted as the Top 100 “Most Influential People” by the Orange County Register.

JAMIE OSTRANDER

Science Teacher
Kinetic Academy Middle School

Jamie Ostrander exerts great effort every day to provide high-quality science instruction for her middle school students. Jamie Ostrander’s approach in her classroom focuses on making her subject interesting for her students by making her lessons relevant to their lives. Ostrander also focuses greatly on her students as a complete person, and works hard to make sure they learn in a safe, comfortable environment where students are able to express themselves and develop their social-emotional well-being, as well.

ANURADHA PRAKASH

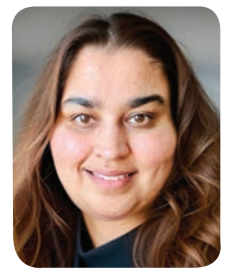
Professor of Food Science
Schmid College of Science and Technology, Chapman University

-Ph.D., Food Science and Technology, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio (1991)
-MS, Food Science and Technology, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio (1989)
-BS, Nutritional Biochemistry, Bombay University, Bombay, India (1987)

It is hard to imagine food science in southern California without Dr. Anuradha Prakash. A professor of food science at Chapman University since 1995, Prakash has been a leader in research, teaching, and service to industry in the region. Prakash’s research, which is consistently funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, has been critical in developing the use of irradiation to enhance the safety and shelf-life of fresh and fresh-cut fruits and vegetables and ready-to-eat meals. This work attracted the attention of the Food and Drug Administration, leading Prakash to spend 10 years as a science advisor to their Pacific Southwest Laboratory in Irvine.

In her role as the director of Chapman’s food science master’s program for more than 15 years, Prakash has taught food safety, food processing and food product development to an entire generation of students who now hold roles in areas such as food safety, food quality, and R&D in some of the nation’s largest food companies. More recently, she has turned her attention to Chapman University’s Food Innovation program, collaborating with food companies all over the region to develop new products in the university’s state-of-the-art Ranney Food Processing Lab.

PREETI PRASHER



Senior Director of Product & Test Engineering
Synaptics Inc.

-Certification in Business Analytics, Wharton Executive Education
-Masters in Electrical Engineering, Lehigh University
-Bachelors in Electrical Engineering, McGill University,

Preeti Prasher is passionate about technology and its socio-economic impact. Her first job in STEM took an oven controller she built to outer space! Her next role enabled families around the globe to save precious memories on hard-disk drives. She then tested ethernet devices that enabled faster data transfer through homes, office workspaces and even cars! Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, GPS and Cellular enabled families to keep in touch. TV tuners kept them entertained. Optical networking enabled the internet and democratized information. Working on LiDAR sensors kept people safe.

As a senior operations leader at Synaptics, she drives productization of sensor, connectivity and AI solutions that simplify the human machine interface. Guided by the mantra “lift as you climb”, she fosters a mindful and supportive environment to develop and innovate new technologies. She has worked at public and pre-IPO enterprises, mentored students and senior leaders alike, participated in technical and women’s conferences, authored blogs, presented an IEEE Webinar and been interviewed by technical publications for her subject matter expertise.

KELLY REN

Executive Director
Areteem Institute

-Master of Science in Electrical Engineering, The Pennsylvania State University
-Bachelor of Science in Applied Physics, Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications

Kelly Ren has been working in the STEM development and applications fields for her entire life. In 2004, Ms. Ren cofounded Kiddie Techie, which became part of the Areteem Institute. Focusing on developing and providing renowned supplementary education programs in STEM - Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, Ms. Ren and her executive team recognize the needs of in-depth and advanced math training to meet the AI era industry demands, and developed systematic math courses, books, and math competition platform and events.

She also serves on the board of directors of a non-profit organization ZEFR - Zoom Education Foundation and Resources. The Areteem team collaborates with the ZEFR executive board and have provided their programs to thousands of students. Many of them have graduated from prestigious colleges and pursuing STEM careers and innovations. Ms. Ren’s team also offers many free educational seminars to parents and the general public to spread the awareness to the STEM opportunities and the needs for the analytical and problem solving skills developed through in-depth math learning. Areteem Institute, having impacted thousands of lives in their dedication to STEM, is celebrating their 20th anniversary in 2024. As a leader, Ms. Ren has dedicated her entire life to the STEM fields and the impact of the field to future generations.

WOMEN IN STEM

MANDY ROGERS

VP, Spacecraft Design Engineering
Terran Orbital

-BS Computer Engineering
Christopher Newport University

Her expertise in systems and software engineering spans the globe, having led significant analytic modernization across the U.S., South Korea, and the U.K. Her technical and leadership contributions span the domains of cyber analytics, counterintelligence, radar systems, and next-Gen ICBM development.

Mandy Rogers brings a wealth of experience to her role as Terran Orbital's VP of Spacecraft Design. Her expertise in systems and software engineering spans the globe, having led significant analytic modernization across the U.S., South Korea, and the U.K. Her technical and leadership contributions span the domains of cyber analytics, counterintelligence, radar systems, and next-Gen ICBM development.

Mandy's exceptional contributions to aerospace and defense have been widely recognized. She has received numerous awards, which celebrated her pioneering work in cyber-physical systems, impactful leadership, and revolutionary approach to defense analysis. She has been featured on notable platforms like Cyberwire, the world's #1 Cyber Podcast, and Utah Business on 'The Future of Deep Tech'. Additionally, she has played a vital role in bridging the gender gap in technology, as reflected in her association with the Women in Cyber and Women in Technology communities.

Committed to promoting diversity and education in STEM, Mandy actively engages in mentoring through Terran WISE (Women in Space and Engineering) at Terran Orbital. This initiative supports and empowers young professionals, particularly women, fostering an inclusive environment that nurtures the next generation of engineers and scientists. Her dedication extends beyond professional achievements, influencing industry practices and educational opportunities in the aerospace sector.

YATRI SHUKLA

Consultant and Adjunct Professor of Business Calculus
Chapman University

-Executive MBA, Chapman University
-Master's in Food Science, Chapman University
-Secondary Science Teaching Credential, Chapman University
-B.Sc. in Medical Microbiology, California State University, Long Beach
-B.Sc. in Microbiology with a Minor in Botany, Gujarat College

Yatri Shukla sets an excellent role model for young females interested in STEM Careers. Shukla is a Business Consultant and an Adjunct Professor of Business Calculus at Chapman University. She worked as an executive in the Food industry as a Research and Development manager in charge of developing innovative new products brought to the national market. She provided technical consulting with independent sensory taste testing studies; the results of these studies were used to validate claims in patent applications that were approved. With her Executive MBA, Master's in Food Science, Bachelor's in Medical Microbiology, and minor in Botany, she is sought out as a Keynote Speaker for talks to inspire the next generation of STEM Women Leaders.

Personally, she served as a Girl Scout Troop Leader and both daughters earned their Girl Scout Gold Award. Shukla also was a Physical and Life Sciences teacher for 20 years at Santiago Charter Middle School and inspired several female students to pursue STEM careers.

MONICA SHUKLA-BELMONTES

Associate Dean, Curriculum, Assurance of Learning, and Competency-Based Education School of Business and Professional Studies
University of Massachusetts, Global

-Chapman University, Ph.D.
-University of Southern California, M.Sc. in Project Management
-Brandman University, Master's in Organizational Leadership
-Brandman University, Master's in Human Resources
-Chapman University, B.Sc. Mathematics
-Chapman University, B.A. Communications

Monica Shukla-Belmontes oversees the Competency Based Education Bachelor's and Master's degree programs at UMass that include STEM subjects allowing several thousands of adult learners to continue their higher education online at their own pace. During the pandemic and post-pandemic 2020-2024 this has assisted the lives of thousands of Orange County learners, their families, and employers of the CBE graduates. Shukla-Belmontes is also an adjunct professor of Mathematics at Chapman University. She received an Award at the 2022 Distinguished Education Awards Dinner hosted by the Orange County Chamber of Commerce. She was recognized by the Orange County Business Journal with an Outstanding Women in Business Nomination. She received a recognition from Congressman Lou Correa as an Orange County Woman of the Year Award. She is an Orange County Girl Scouts Gold Award winner and mentors young females interested in STEM careers. She influences Orange County a great deal through her community service and charity donations.

BRIDGETTE SIEFFERT

Augmented Reality/Virtual Reality Engineer
Terran Orbital

-BS Computer Engineering from University of Minnesota
-MS Computer and Electrical Engineering, AR/VR - Computer Graphics

Bridgette Sieffert, Terran Orbital's Augmented Reality engineer, is a visionary. Since joining, she's spearheaded the company's AR/VR initiatives across various departments, from manufacturing to showcasing pioneering technology demonstrations. Sieffert's contributions have aided in winning key business, and her innovative solutions have revolutionized training programs, saving time and boosting efficiency. Her AR simulations streamline production, for example improving harness routing, while captivating AR demos at trade shows win over customers.

Sieffert's dedication extends to Terran WISE (Women in Space and Engineering), where she holds a position on the affinity group's board and participates in the mentorship program for future leaders, and captains the Terran Orbital softball league. Sieffert's contributions are pivotal to the company's success.

ORIANA SLASOR, PE

Vice President, Orange County
Engineering

Fuscoe Engineering, Inc.
-BS, Civil Engineering, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada

With an impressive tenure of 22 years at Fuscoe Engineering, Oriana Slasor, PE has not only excelled but has risen in leadership as the vice president of engineering in Orange County. Slasor oversees all civil engineering practice studios: Urban Infill, Master Plan, Commercial and Residential. She is also an Executive Team member, directly influencing the firm's strategic vision, growth and goals. Slasor's remarkable dedication to professionalism, efficiency and excellence are hallmarks of her work. Her passion for design integrity and undeniable expertise is valued by both her clients, colleagues and team members.

Slasor has led many significant projects in Orange County, notably, Bristol Street Master Plan, ocV!BE Mixed-Use Village, Vea Resort Hotel, Villas at Fashion Island. Slasor has left an indelible mark on the landscape of civil engineering throughout Southern California. As the highest-ranked female engineer at Fuscoe Engineering, Slasor is a beacon of inspiration in the firm's mentorship program for young engineers, offering her industry knowledge, sound advice, and support, creating a role model for all women in engineering.

HANNAH TRINH

Manufacturing Engineer
Verus Aerospace

-University of California, Irvine, bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering

Hannah Trinh, is a very dedicated Engineer and a graduate from University of California, Irvine with her bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering.

She supports Arden Engineering in Quality as well as Manufacturing processes.

Although, Trinh has only been with Arden for two years, she has gained the respect of the team as she was nominated and won Employee of the month and Employee of the year for 2023.

She supports internal and external corrective actions to improve Arden Engineering processes.

Trinh has also taken on the additional responsibilities of becoming a mentor to our college interns, as well as our high school students during our summer STEM internship program that Arden is involved in with Tustin Unified School District.

WOMEN IN STEM

JAIME WHEELER

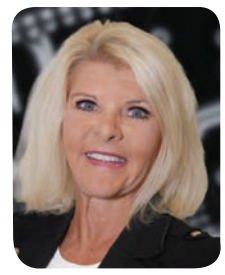
Senior Vice President, Clinical Affairs
Edwards Lifesciences

-Master of Business Administration, Florida Atlantic University
-Bachelor of Science, Virginia Tech

As Edwards Lifesciences SVP of Clinical Affairs, Jaime Wheeler's leadership of the HUDDLE study is a key example of her bold and decisive work on behalf of Edwards and the patients we serve. Initiated in 2021, this first-of-its-kind research aimed to explore heart disease prevalence and associated risk factors among NFL Alumni Association members and their families. The study focused on groups that historically faced disparities in healthcare access. Despite more than one million global patients receiving TAVR treatment, African Americans in the U.S. have maintained a consistent treatment rate of about 4%, despite comprising 14% of the population.

Wheeler's dedication and passion contributed to the study's success, shedding light on heart disease's impact in underrepresented communities. The findings revealed a significant discrepancy between participant self-awareness and the actual prevalence of heart disease and associated risk factors. These results were recently presented at the American College of Cardiology and published in The Journal of the American College of Cardiology.

SARA WISSMUELLER



Chief Information Officer
Phillips

-Marquette University, Masters of Business Administration
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Bachelor of Business Administration
- Information Systems & Accounting

Sara Wissmueller plays a pivotal role in the Phillips Family of companies, overseeing all business units. Her leadership is crucial in driving the company's focus on enhancing efficiency, strengthening security, and ensuring seamless operations across the board. Wissmueller's strategic initiatives encompass a broad spectrum, including network support, development and management of ERP and CRM systems, compliance, cybersecurity measures, and robust business continuity plans.

In addition to her strategic initiatives, Wissmueller is responsible for maintaining cloud infrastructure, developing and supporting data warehouses, and managing customer support services. She also focuses on improving production support and streamlining the quote-to-cash process. Her comprehensive oversight extends to providing IT support for all operational areas within the company.

Wissmueller's multifaceted leadership and commitment to technological innovation significantly contribute to the organization's success, aligning with its goals of operational excellence and global synchronization. Her contributions make her an exemplary candidate for recognition, showcasing her impact in enhancing not only technology and operations but also the overall strategic direction of the company.

MORGAN ZANDONELLA

Engineering Program Manager | CTOR
Medtronic

-Bachelor's degree in biomedical engineering from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
-Certificate in Technical Management from the University of California, Irvine

Morgan Zandonella entered the medical device industry over eight years ago with the purpose of developing products that support and save lives. She holds a bachelor's degree in biomedical engineering from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, a Certificate in Technical Management from the University of California, Irvine, and is a Project Management Professional®. She works as an engineering program manager for Medtronic Neurovascular, which designs and manufactures devices that treat and prevent stroke. She was also the president of the SWE OC chapter. Through her position as a board member of Vital Link, she gives back to the community by speaking to other young women who are interested in pursuing engineering careers and helps them build the path toward their STEM careers.