



BLOOMING
Inclusion and Diversity in STEAM

Interview Questions

STEAM Journey: "Can you share your journey and what inspired you to pursue a career in STEAM? Were there any key moments or influential figures that directed you towards this path?"

My journey into STEAM began with the early influence of my parents and teachers, who recognized my curiosity and encouraged my exploration of science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics. Their support fostered a natural inclination towards problem-solving and innovation from a young age. Additionally, I've always been drawn to challenges and pushing beyond my comfort zone, which aligns perfectly with the dynamic and evolving nature of STEAM disciplines. I enjoyed participating in mathematics and informatics competitions, and I would feel really empowered by receiving awards in the mathematics Olympiad. One of my university lecturers in computer science advised me to apply for a postgraduate scholarship offered by the Irish Research Centre and with his encouragement I was awarded a PhD scholarship in the area of Information and Network Security.

STEAM Achievement: "What do you consider your most significant achievement or contribution to your field? How do you hope your work will impact the future of STEAM?"

One of my most significant achievements in STEAM has been the research achievements that contributed to straighten the security of Internet by contributing to development of design of security protocols and the detection and prevention of network attacks. Furthermore, the most satisfying achievements I receive when my current or former students that I mentored and supported obtain their dream job or postgraduate scholarships at prestigious universities all over the globe. I believe my work will impact the future of STEAM by providing more secure network



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communications, advancing the quantum resistant technology and train future researchers and employees to continue this work.

Challenges and Overcoming Them: "Throughout your career in STEAM, what were some of the significant challenges you faced both in your personal and professional life? How did you overcome them? How did these challenges shape your professional journey?"

Throughout my career, I've encountered various challenges, both personal and professional. From imposter syndrome to navigating male-dominated environments, these hurdles tested my resilience and determination. However, each challenge served as an opportunity for growth and learning. I overcame them by seeking support from mentors, building a strong network of peers, and continuously developing my skills and confidence. These challenges have shaped my professional journey by instilling in me a deep sense of perseverance and adaptability, essential qualities in the ever-changing landscape of STEAM.

For instance, I vividly recall my first experience attending a conference focused on Network Security. Eager to share my discoveries regarding previously unidentified flaws in security protocol designs, I approached the event with great enthusiasm. As a young female researcher at the age of 23, I found myself in a predominantly male environment, with most attendees being over 35 years old. Upon presenting my findings, I encountered skepticism from the predominantly male audience, who seemed surprised that such work could come from someone of my age and gender. Prior to my presentation, there were inquiries about whether I was attending as a companion of another conference participant. However, the sense of fulfillment I experienced during my presentation, coupled with the astonishment of the audience upon realizing that the results were indeed my own, left me with a profound sense of satisfaction.

Advice for Young Women: "What advice would you give to young girls who are interested in STEAM but might be hesitant to pursue it due to stereotypes or the fear of failure?"

To young girls interested in STEAM but hesitant to pursue it due to stereotypes or fear of failure, I would say: Embrace your curiosity and passion. Don't let stereotypes or fear hold you back from exploring your interests. Surround yourself with supportive mentors and peers who believe in your potential. Remember that failure is a natural part of the learning process and can lead to valuable insights and growth. Stay determined, be resilient, and never underestimate your abilities. The world needs your unique perspective and contributions in STEAM.



Future of Women in STEAM: "Looking towards the future, how do you see the role of women evolving in STEAM fields? What changes do you think are necessary to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for women in STEAM?"

Looking ahead, I envision the role of women in STEAM fields evolving to become more prominent and influential. With increased awareness and efforts to promote diversity and inclusion, I believe we will see more women breaking barriers and leading innovation in STEAM disciplines. To create a more inclusive and supportive environment for women in STEAM, it's crucial to address systemic biases, provide equal opportunities for education and career advancement, and celebrate the achievements of women in the field. By fostering a culture of empowerment and diversity, we can unlock the full potential of women in STEAM and drive positive change for generations to come.