

NFWL National Policy Committee on Education & Training

Resolution: In support of initiatives that give historically underachieving, underrepresented and underserved populations the ability to make STEM fields a career choice through programs that offer specific support in STEM fields.

(Ratified November 2012)

WHEREAS, the release of a Congressionally mandated study by the National Academy of Sciences in 2005, “Rising above the Gathering Storm,” predicted an erosion of U.S. scientific and technical leadership and economic influence unless the country improved and expanded STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) education for its citizens; and

WHEREAS, in a follow-up report released in 2010, the academy and its companion National Academy of Engineering and Institute of Medicine said underrepresented minority people represent a largely untapped pool of American talent that could help fill the coming wave of STEM jobs; and

WHEREAS, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, STEM fields are expected to add 2.7 million new jobs by 2018; and

WHEREAS, of college-educated Americans, people of racial and ethnic minorities—including African, Hispanic and Native Americans—represented only 9 percent of those in science and engineering occupations in 2006; and

WHEREAS, the nation’s current engineering workforce is now 4.5% African-American, 5.5% Hispanic and 12.7% Asian and women account for just 12.7% of engineering professionals; and

WHEREAS, minorities and women continue to be underrepresented in the engineering profession in spite of modest gains in recent years; and

WHEREAS, one key to increasing the number of minorities in engineering may be putting more emphasis on community colleges with articulated degree programs with four-year institutions specifically in STEM careers and support for non-traditional students; and

WHEREAS, in analyses by the National Center for Education Statistics in 2009 and 2011, black and Hispanic students trailed their white peers by an average of more than 20 test-score points on the NAEP (National Assessment of Education Progress) math and reading assessments at 4th and 8th grades, a difference of about two grade levels; these gaps persisted even though the score differentials between black and white students narrowed between 1992 and 2007 in 4th grade math and reading and 8th grade math (NCES, 2009, 2011); and

WHEREAS, with high school graduation rates of 75% to 80% (and 64% for Hispanics and 62% for African-Americans) we lose a lot of potential STEM students long before college; at the same time, many students graduating from high schools are not taking the math and science courses necessary to pursue a STEM career; now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the National Foundation for Women Legislators’ National Policy Committee on Education & Training encourages local, state, and federal policymakers to support initiatives that give historically underachieving, underrepresented and underserved populations the ability to make STEM fields a career choice through programs that offer specific support in STEM fields.