

Written Evidence Submitted by Professor Alice Gast, President, Imperial College London (DIV0105)

We were pleased to submit evidence to the Committee's Diversity and inclusion in STEM inquiry recently. I was very disappointed to hear the Chair of the Social Mobility Commission, Katharine Birbalsingh CBE, make statements on girls 'naturally' being less likely to choose A-Level Physics when she gave evidence to the Committee this week. These are precisely the attitudes that discourage girls from pursuing studies and careers in science.

Improving the diversity of the STEM pipeline of talent throughout the education system is essential to addressing underrepresentation in STEM roles. Imperial is committed to engaging and collaborating with underrepresented groups to widen access and increase diversity within STEM. Working with a range of partners, our long-term vision is to create an inclusive innovation ecosystem that builds skills, confidence, engagement, and employment opportunities in STEM.

I am sure that you were impressed to see some of our fantastic STEM outreach work at [The Invention Rooms](#) during your visit to our White City Campus last month. As you saw, we have created a programme of local engagement centred on The Invention Rooms, a pioneering community collaboration space. The activities and programmes we have co-developed with our community partners draw from our institutional strengths and capabilities as a science-focused university to respond to local needs and priorities. Our Maker Challenge series, for young people aged 11-18 transforms their tech skills and confidence as they develop an idea and see it through to creation; we have "challenged" more than 1,000 young people over the last five years.

You may also be aware of one of our latest initiatives to widen access and participation for students from underrepresented backgrounds through the creation of the [Imperial College London Mathematics School](#). It will accept sixth form students taking maths and further maths, alongside a range of other subjects, with a focus on attracting more female, ethnic minority and other underrepresented students. The Mathematics School is a partnership between Imperial and Frontier Learning Trust, an Academy Trust including Woodhouse College. Pupils and teachers will get the chance to work with some of the world's leading mathematicians, as well as current Imperial students, to improve social mobility and diversity in STEM.

Imperial is a leading international scientific community where women succeed. Our [Her Imperial](#) programme nurtures talented females to explore careers in science, engineering and maths, and gives them the tools to thrive and become science and innovation leaders in their field. [WE Innovate](#), our women's entrepreneurship programme inspires and accelerates the progress of women entrepreneurs, we have a range of department-level initiatives that [support women in science](#) and [female students](#) interested in studying at Imperial and our non-residential [Summer School for Year 9 girls](#) inspires girls with the breadth of engineering disciplines available.

I would be delighted to show you and the Committee some of these initiatives at your convenience and for you to meet some of our [fantastic female science leaders](#). Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any help.

(28th April 2022)