

STEM MENTORSHIP AND ADVOCACY – EMPOWERED WOMEN EMPOWER WOMEN

Because they do! I would not be where I am today without the mentorship and women in my life; therefore, I relentlessly devote time to empower youth and give back to my community.

My name is Silver. I am an Iraqi-American. Muslim. Former refugee. Proud immigrant. Leader. Scientist. Clinical Pharmacologist in the making...

I am a graduate student in the Pharmaceutical Sciences and Pharmacogenomics Program at UCSF. Prior to UCSF, I worked as a Scientific Researcher in the Clinical Pharmacology Department at Genentech where I supported small-molecule projects in the oncology portfolio. In 2019, I earned my bachelor's degree in Chemical Biology from UC Berkeley (Go Bears!).

Mentorship represents a big aspect of my academic and professional life. I have had a strong mentoring relationship with professors, major advisors, and industry leaders throughout my academic and professional journey. I feel very lucky to be a female STEM student while encouraging and empowering other female STEM students to pursue their education and career in science in order to build an inclusive, uplifting, and supporting scientific society that welcomes everyone in innovation.

I have been actively involved in mentoring women in STEM throughout my time in community college, Cal, and now in graduate school. My journey of mentorship and advocacy started almost 6 years ago at Girls Inc. of the Island City, a non-profit community organization in Alameda, California, I mentored girls who came from low-income and culturally diverse backgrounds, ages 9 to 11. Through Operation Smart Program, I supported the students in discovering an interest in science, technology, engineering, and math; and I encouraged them to achieve their personal, educational, and career goals. As a volunteer in this program, I developed and facilitated numerous chemistry experiments and engaging hands-on activities. The experiments that I developed for the Girls Inc. students proved to be highly effective teaching tools and became

permanent activities in the curriculum of the program. These activities included performing acid-base reactions, experiments on transitions between states of matter, and games that teach science vocabulary. In addition to the development of science curriculum, teaching and mentoring allowed me to connect on a profound level with twenty girls who were very passionate about chemistry and its interactions with our everyday life. Later on, I served as the program coordinator of Girls Inc. Eureka program. In partnership with community members, I provided educational guidance for high-school female students. In those mentoring sessions, I focused on the essential foundation of working hard in their math and science courses, graduating from high school, and obtaining college degrees in STEM fields in order to become pioneer scientists who are capable of solving global problems.

While in community college, I received a generous scholarship to support my transfer process to Cal through the AAUW Alameda Branch. Formerly known as the American Association of University Women, this organization is the nation's oldest and largest non-profit promoting education and opportunities for girls and women, equal pay, freedom from discrimination and sexual harassment, and equal opportunities in all walks of life. Locally, the Alameda Branch raises funds for scholarships for local middle school girls to attend annual Tech Trek summer science camps and for College of Alameda (COA) women graduates to pursue higher education and leadership development. And I happened to be one of those lucky women in 2017. It did not end there though...AAUW continued to nourish my personal, academic, and professional journey; while I persisted to give back in all possible means.

|"To all the empowered women out there: your story is not over yet."

One of my best memories as a student at Cal was being accepted as a Bergeron Scholar during my senior year (2019). Being a part of the Bergeron Scholars Program granted me the life-changing opportunity to travel out of state with my fellow scholars and attend the AAUW's National Conference for College Women Student Leaders (NCCWSL) at the University of Maryland. NCCWSL was a transformative experience that will forever linger with me. It was a weekend filled with powerful workshops, inspirational speakers, and effective strategies to crush the patriarchy. I had the privilege of meeting empowered women from all over the nation, pursuing their education, and changing our world. One former NCCWSL attendee said: When we

empower women, “She does not just change her herself – she changes her household, she changes her community, and it’s possible she changes the world.” And I could not say it better than she did.

I came back to California startled, filled with passion and confidence to pursue my craft and journey in science and mentoring other women. In less than two days, I met with my AAUW Alameda Branch members and talked about my experience at the conference and the invaluable memories that I created with my fellow Bergeron Scholars (who are also my best friends till this day!). And with that, a new AAUW program was launched at COA. We raised funds and started interviewing candidates to send them to the next AAUW NCCWSL. I was so happy and excited for the women we selected, and I was proud of their tenacity and perseverance given their exceptional backgrounds: student parents, low-income, and first-generation college students.

I was then invited to speak about my NCCWSL experience as a keynote speaker representing AAUW California at Orinda/Moraga/Lafayette Branch, where more than 50 AAUW members listened to me talking about the importance of maintaining a program like NCCWSL and advocating to raise more funds to send more students. Fast forward to 2020, I received an invitation to host a workshop at AAUW STEM Techbridge conference for middle school girls. Nothing sounded more relevant than teaching them about the application of Clinical Pharmacology to combat COVID-19! And of course, I encouraged them to attend NCCWSL once they are in college

Currently, I am leading a new AAUW Alameda mentorship initiative where new COA scholarship recipients are paired up with former scholarship recipients based on their STEM interests and career goals in order to foster a supportive and motivating environment. Now that everything has shifted to a virtual space, this type of support is needed more than ever!

To all the empowered women out there: your story is not over yet.