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# Two undergraduates to speak at ENVISION: STEM Career Day Supporting Young Women

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## Eberly College of Science 'I AM STEM' winners to share advice with 6- through 12-graders at public outreach event

**Rachael Huxford**

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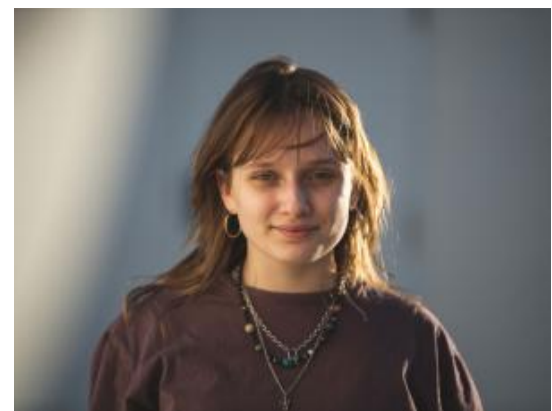
Who has had a profound impact on your science journey? For **Miatu Kormah**, a 4th-year undergraduate student majoring in biological sciences and health professions, the answer was easy: "My mom." Kormah's mother instilled in her a passion for education and the confidence to excel in it. "[She] taught me to defy every obstacle that tried to impede my destiny," Kormah wrote in a recent essay contest submission.

Kormah will be one of two undergraduate students sharing more about their academic journeys in STEM fields and giving advice to middle and high school students looking to pursue science careers during the Eberly College of Science **ENVISION: STEM Career Day Supporting Young Women** on Saturday, Feb. 25. During this event, students will gain valuable insight and advice on pursuing academic and professional careers in STEM, learn about the experiences of women and other underrepresented minorities in STEM fields, have the opportunity to network and engage in hands-on STEM projects, and hopefully, "envision" themselves in the STEM fields, too.

*Miatu Kormah. Image provided*[▲BACK TO TOP](#)

Kormah will be joined by **Natalya (Tasha) Radovic**, a 2nd-year student majoring in physics and astronomy. They were selected as the ENVISION keynote speakers during the fall 2022 “I AM STEM” competition, which provides Eberly College of Science undergraduate and graduate students the opportunity to develop their personal and science communication skills. The event consists of two rounds — an essay writing contest, and a six-minute keynote. Radovic and Kormah were the first- and second-prize winners, respectively.

Each were kind enough to sit for an interview and talk about their journeys in science, science communication, and participating in the I AM STEM competition this past fall.



*Natalya (Tasha) Radovic. Credit: Michelle Bixby*

## What got each of you started in science?

**Radovic:** I grew up near the Fermi Lab National Accelerator Laboratory, so getting to take tours and listen to lectures on the weekend definitely helped foster my interest at an early age. As I grew up, if we’re being honest, I discovered that I don’t have a natural aptitude for physics. Yet, it’s always been the really big questions in life that are the most interesting to me. So, I went for it, and now I’m at Penn State studying astrophysics! It’s challenging, but I’ve learned to enjoy the process of stretching my intellectual rubber band every single day.

**Kormah:** I was actually born in Liberia and came to the U.S. when I was younger, but I was always smart and interested in science. Some kids want to be Spider-man or a firefighter, but me? I wanted to be a pediatrician. When I would get my other work done, I would spend my free time doing science experiments and studying science affairs. So, I always knew I would be a doctor; it’s just been about getting there.

## Both of you are busy students. What inspired you to apply for the contest?

**Kormah:** To be honest, I found out about the competition the day the first essay was due, but after reading the prompt I knew immediately who I would write about — my mom. Eventually, after I become a dermatologist, I’d also like to write a textbook that has representation for black skin, so participating in science communication when I can is key for me.

**Radovic:** A speaking competition with a bunch of other nerds? I just had to enter. There are so many different directions I can go with my degree once I graduate. Right now, I’m looking to go into research, but I also value science communication. I AM STEM has been a great opportunity to keep up with my presentation skills while inspiring the next generation of women in STEM. I also love to talk about myself, so when I saw the opportunity to speak – it was a no brainer.

## What did you gain from the experience? Did reflecting on your own journeys cause any self-revelations?

**Radovic:** It definitely caused me to reflect on a lot of the issues in the scientific community that are present, normalized, and swept under the rug. Uplifting underrepresented voices in science is so important. As an LGBTQ+ human in physics, it’s rare to hear about anyone with similar experiences. If all types of stories are shared and heard, maybe we would all feel a little more comfortable, and allyship would be common.

**Kormah:** Being a part of this competition definitely reinforced my passion for inspiring the next generation, particularly those who look like me. As a representative of the less than three percent of black women in science, being a voice and having people understand, even if they cannot relate to my story, is very important. The little girl that looks like me and is coming from where I came from could be in that room at ENVISION. They might see me and be like oh, she can do it, I can do too.

## Not to scoop your amazing keynotes – but is there any advice you would leave for the next generation of women in science?

**Kormah:** I would just say — resilience is brilliance. It’s not easy to show up and show out every single day, but that is exactly what you have to do as a woman in STEM. The face of science shouldn’t be boring – so why should we be? How you choose to represent yourself says nothing about your abilities. Don’t give up, and you will excel.

**Radovic:** I’m glad that you asked this! Some of the feedback from judges was that my talk might actually scare people instead of getting them into science, but getting into science is a little scary! In my speech, I give advice that I needed to hear. I had a rough transition going into college and had to learn a lot of lessons on my own. I want others to know that it is completely normal to have doubts about yourself, but perseverance is key. If you have passion, you can do it.

## About ENVISION: STEM Career Day Supporting Young Women:

The primary goal of ENVISION: STEM Career Day Supporting Young Women is to help girls and young women see themselves in the STEM fields. However, ENVISION is open to all students who are currently in grades 6 to 12. ENVISION 2023 – organized by the Penn State Eberly College of Science -- will be held on Saturday, Feb. 25, 2023.

Throughout this experience, ENVISION attendees will hear inspiring speakers, learn from Penn State scientists, engineers, mathematicians, and technology experts, and participate in informal conversations with students and professional scientists. Attendees will learn what women in STEM do, what they can accomplish, and how STEM is relevant to your own journey. For event information, visit the [ENVISION website](#). Registration for the 2023 event closes on Sunday, Feb. 19.

### About I AM STEM Competition:

The I AM STEM speaking contest was designed to help Penn State's Eberly College of Science students develop and share stories of their science journey. Winners of the contest have been keynote speakers at the college's annual ENVISION: STEM Career Day Supporting Young Women event where they have been able to inspire other burgeoning STEM minds. Other contest objectives include developing science communication abilities and identifying and showcasing Eberly College of Science students with inspiring, authentic STEM stories

Additional fall 2022 participants included Eberly College of Science undergraduate students **Basma AlMahmood**, **Ariella Biney**, and **Emma Khoury**, and graduate student **Unnati Akhouri**.

More information about the I AM STEM competition is available on the [Eberly College of Science website](#).

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