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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STEM Professional Development Initiative STEMxx Chats Launches Amid Pandemic
Shutdown catalyzes new model for supporting, preparing, and propelling young people in STEM

Cambridge, MA: Amid the shutdown, MIT affiliates decided to harness the remote world to bring people together across the globe. They wanted to connect with others in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) disciplines and support one another. This forced inactivity also provided time for students to dive into soft skills and explore career possibilities that are often underemphasized in their education. With a group of 30 young women in high school, college, and graduate school, they began having small group discussions and hosting interviews with top women in STEM and panels related to career decisions. Things grew rapidly and within months the events and online content had reached over 1000 people from all over the world.

Dr. Alice Stanton, MIT Postdoctoral Associate in the Robert Langer Lab, spearheaded the initiative with the early support of many talented young women across the country (many of whom are listed on our people page on the website). She wanted a way to continue supporting the students amid the new circumstances and to harness it as an educational opportunity. “The pandemic was our catalyst, but our goals at STEMxx Chats extend far beyond it. We have uncovered the power of breaking down barriers between locations and career stages, of giving young women the opportunity to run an organization and learn by doing, of filling in the gaps in personal skills development and understanding of career journeys that exist in STEM education, and of helping young people experience the thrill of being a positive changemaker.”

Now with young women leaders across the globe (including 17 US States and 5 countries) working together in 8 departments and meeting in small discussion groups and other activities, they enjoy helping one another grow so that they can make the world a better place—now and in the future. Chapters of STEMxx Chats have started at MIT, by Chemistry graduate student Shirley Chen and Mechanical Engineering undergraduate Mariana Avila, and at other institutions, to build this ecosystem within local environments, while collaborating in this borderless group. They have hosted speakers such as MIT Head of Chemical Engineering Prof. Paula Hammond, Princeton University President Emerita Shirley Tilghman, and Cala Health Founder and CSO Dr. Kate Rosenbluth. They have moderated panels on “To PhD or not to PhD” and “Choosing a College for STEM.” The events have conveyed real inside scoop, life advice, and personal perspectives. They want to continue to help everyone “go big” in life and work.

About STEMxx Chats: STEMxx Chats is changing professional development for STEM careers and catalyzing positive impact in the work and lives of STEM professionals. We are building an ecosystem of empowerment in STEM, breaking down barriers between disciplines and career stages, and propelling positive changemakers to solve the big problems of our day. We are person-centered and impact-driven. We host events with top women in STEM, create online resources, dialogue & support one another, and work together on leadership teams & projects.