

Educators Can Help Make Stem Fields Diverse – Over 25 Years, I’ve Identified Nudges That Can Encourage Students to Stay

September 15, 2022

Jen, a student I taught early in my career, stood head-and-shoulders above her peers academically. I learned she had started off as an engineering major but switched over to psychology. I was surprised and curious.

Was she struggling with difficult classes? No. In fact, Jen’s aptitude for math was so strong, she had been recruited as an engineering prospect. In her first year, her engineering classes were filled with faces of other women. But as she advanced, there were fewer and fewer women in her classes – until one day, she realized she was the only woman in a large lecture class of men.

Jen began to question if she belonged. Then she started to wonder if she cared enough to persist in engineering. Her quest to understand what she was feeling brought her to my psychology class.

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