Science & Technology

Ursula Burns: Straight Talk on STEM

Summer 2019



Timothy Lee Photographers / Columbia Engineering

Ursula Burns ’82SEAS, CEO of the telecommunications company Veon and former head of Xerox, recently joined Columbia engineering dean Mary C. Boyce at the launch of New York City Women in Tech, an organization that cultivates the talent of women engineers. During a panel discussion at the Forum, Burns explained her choice of career and talked about the need for more diversity in STEM fields.

"I remember going to the library and saying, ‘OK, I need to figure out a way to get my mother out of poverty — myself as well. What’s the degree that actually gets me the most money after four years of college?’ And it was chemical engineering. So basically I said, ‘I’ll do that.’"

"In NYC the deans of three top engineering schools are women — it’s a big deal. Leaders set tones; they often can also set rules, in addition to being an example."

"If you think about the role that we’re playing — men designed it. They selected the players; they selected the rules and selected what winning looks like."



Guide to school abbreviations

All categories >