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October I CAN STEM New Jersey Role Model Announced

Chatham, N.J. (October 1, 2021) The New Jersey STEM Pathways Network (“NJSPN”) is excited to announce its July I CAN STEM New Jersey STEM Role Model, Helena Mello.

Helena is a Brazilian science researcher at Rutgers University, where she is pursuing her PhD degree in Biomedical Sciences. She went to Rutgers as an undergraduate exchange student for one year, and decided to come back to New Jersey for her doctoral program. In the lab, Helena is investigating how a virus can cause cancer in infected patients, and hopes to shed light into virus-host interactions. Besides her research, Helena advocates for science outreach and career awareness for STEM graduates. She has served as a mentor with the New York Academy of Sciences, and has worked as Senior Editor and Writer for a student-led career development blog. In Brazil, Helena has taught English and Biology classes to prepare low-income students for the university entrance exam. After defending her doctoral dissertation, Helena plans to work as a science communicator.

Through I CAN STEM, the NJSPN aims to increase the diversity of New Jersey’s STEM workforce and academic pipelines. I CAN STEM will highlight diverse STEM role models so that all students will be able to see themselves participating and succeeding in STEM courses and careers. Each year, 12 I CAN STEM New Jersey Role Models will be highlighted, one each month.

NJSPN features both historical and famous I CAN STEM Role Models, such as physicist Shirley Ann Jackson, mathematician Alberto Calderón, and molecular biologist Flossie Wong-Staal, as well as I CAN STEM New Jersey Role Models representing people of color, LGBTQ+ community members and women who work in a STEM field here in New Jersey .

The I CAN STEM New Jersey Role Models were identified through an online nomination process. Nominations for 2021 are closed and nominations for 2022 will begin in September. Anyone can submit a nomination that meets the diversity criteria and works



in New Jersey in a STEM field. The nomination form will be available at njstempathways.org.

For more information on I CAN STEM visit <https://njstempathways.org/i-can-stem/>.

The NJSPN was created in 2014 and is managed by the Research & Development Council for New Jersey. It includes over 500 STEM leaders from across the State and connects all STEM stakeholders-K-12, higher education, non-profit, informal providers, business, philanthropists and government. NJSPN has six STEM learning ecosystems as part of an international network of ecosystems supported by the STEM Funders' Network. You can learn more about the Jersey STEM Pathways Network and New Jersey's STEM Ecosystems by visiting www.njstempathways.org.