

# Editorial: Putting women front and center



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Oklahomans got their first glimpse last week of amazing things at the [GE Oil and Gas Technology Center](#) that will make the state stand out. Employers should take a cue from the global company when it comes to innovation.

The company's scientists showed reporters and several hundred guests a few of the research projects in progress. The workers are a diverse group, to say the least.

Jeremy Van Dam showed a prototype of an oil and gas pump that uses wastewater, rather than electricity, to get petroleum to the earth's surface. Paulina Mwangi showed off the equipment she'll use in her lab to make old oil fields more productive, while reducing climate-changing pollution. Ashraf El-Messidi and Dustin Sharber demonstrated how GE is partnering with Oklahoma State University to improve methane-detecting drones.

After reporters got a sneak peek at the laboratories, General Manager Mike Ming explained why workforce development was so important. GE sponsors a summer camp for high schoolers interested in science, engineering, technology and math careers.

Its employees are mentors for students at the Oklahoma School of Science and Mathematics, GE's literal next-door neighbor. OSSM student **Ingrid Gao** told the audience why it was important to have a role model from the global research giant.

After the speeches concluded, electrical engineer Xiaoqing Ge cut the wide red ribbon with a pair of oversized scissors. She's the lead for the company's protection and control systems division at the research center.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing we saw at the GE Oil and Gas Technology Center wasn't the new advances in the labs or the partnerships with local oil and gas drillers. The company put women, in particular the engineers, front and center. Ming did more than just say the company is focused on promoting the development of young women interested in pursuing STEM careers. He showed it.

Women make up nearly 50 percent of the world's population, the World Bank estimates. They accounted for nearly 54 percent of the national workforce in 2015, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Women represent 53 percent of Oklahoma's workforce. Among Oklahoma's 12,753 engineers, only 33 percent were women.

Women aren't often the public face of a company. Oklahoma's major industries, including oil and gas, aerospace and agriculture can do more to recruit and retain a diverse workforce by advancing women in leadership roles.

GE's early career development program helps engineers get advanced degrees and trains them for management roles. Last year 50 percent of those people were women.

Oklahoma could do worse than to follow GE's lead by helping women advance in their careers.

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