



Meet Virginia



Interviewer:

Hi Virginia! Let's start by having you introduce yourself. Who are you, where are you from, and where are you currently attending college?

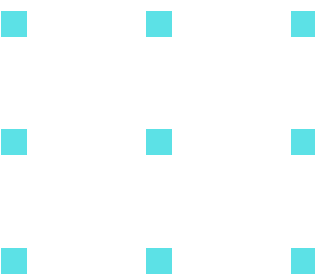
What year are you in, and what's your major?



Virginia:



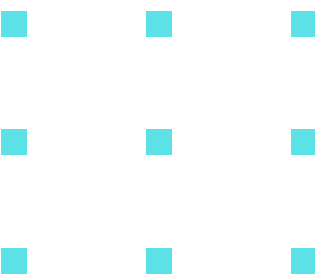
Hello! My name is Virginia, and I am from West Winfield, NY. Currently, I attend Mohawk Valley Community College as a first-year student, and I am majoring in Adolescent Education.





What are some of your favorite classes right now? Have any of them connected back to what you learned at the STEAM Leadership Conference?

My current favorite classes are ASL 102 and Environmental Science. In my science class, the STEAM Leadership Conference I attended in 2023 has helped me grasp the vast concepts that are being taught. The conference gave me a brief introduction to some of the topics that I am now learning more about in college. At the 2024 conference, I was able to engage with a student who was hearing impaired, and I learned a little bit of ASL from him and his interpreter. That gave me a small boost in my current ASL class!





What motivated you to attend the STEAM Leadership Conference in the first place?

My main motivation for attending was the topics they were offering. I'm really interested in climate change and artificial intelligence and the human mind. From both conferences, I gained valuable knowledge in those areas—and made lasting friendships. Plus, the Creating Connections Fair gave me great networking opportunities that have already helped me in college.

How did the conference influence your decision to pursue your current major and career path? Were there any moments or speakers that had a big impact?

The 2023 STEAM Leadership Conference really solidified my decision to go into education. It was so informative, and connecting with earth science educators and learning about their paths helped me realize that I wanted to be an educator like them.



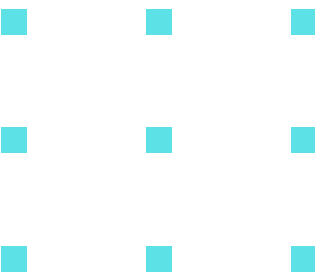


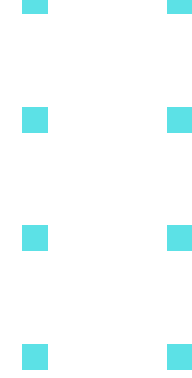
Have you had the chance to work on any STEAM projects in college yet?
If so, how did the conference prepare you?

Since I'm still in my first year, I haven't worked on any STEAM projects yet. But I do feel ready for them because of the conferences. I've developed communication, leadership, and public speaking skills—and even won awards for them! I've also learned how to research and present effectively.

You recently volunteered at the 2025 STEAM Women Rising Symposium. How was it transitioning from attendee to volunteer?
What was your biggest takeaway?

It was definitely a big jump! Being a volunteer is a completely different experience. I loved seeing the behind-the-scenes coordination and communication that goes into making such an inspirational event. My biggest takeaway was realizing how unique each panelist's story is—no two people share the same path.



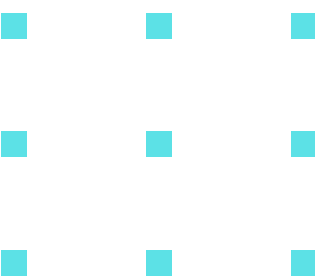


■ ■ **What are your career goals? Do you see yourself continuing in a STEAM-related field?**

I hope to become a high school earth science educator. I've always been fascinated by how the world works and was inspired by my own high school science teachers.

**As a woman in STEAM, do you think gender will be a barrier in reaching your goals?
How do you plan to overcome those challenges?**

I do think gender will create roadblocks, especially since science education is still male-dominated. But I want to be part of the group that breaks that trend. I plan to work hard—even when I get tired—because it's worth it. I'll take advantage of every opportunity to grow, even if it means stepping out of my comfort zone.





- ■ What advice would you give to students thinking about attending the STEAM Leadership Conference? Why should they take advantage of this opportunity?

Bring a notebook, a folder, and a bunch of pens—you'll need them for all the notes you'll take! Soak up as much as you can. The presenters and coordinators have so much to share. Start conversations and don't let fear hold you back. I almost didn't go because I was worried—what if my friends weren't going, what if I didn't like the workshops? But the experience turned out to be one of the best I've had. Every student should have that chance.

Thanks so much for sharing your story, Virginia! Your passion and perspective are inspiring. We can't wait to see how far your STEAM journey takes you! 🌟

