Cognizant U.S. Foundation Invests $5.2 Million to Help Increase Number of Women Graduating with Computer Science Degrees and Entering Technology Careers

Grant Will Enable Break Through Tech's Expansion to Three New Cities; Additional Support Provided by Pivotal Ventures, the Investment and Incubation Company Founded by Melinda Gates

WASHINGTON, Jan. 28, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- The Cognizant U.S. Foundation today announced its largest grant to date designed to increase the number of women majoring in computer science and pursuing careers in technology. The $5.2 million, five-year grant will support the national expansion of Break Through Tech, formerly known as WiTNY (Women in Technology and Entrepreneurship New York), in partnership with Pivotal Ventures and its $50 million Gender Equality in Tech (GET) Cities initiative. Break Through Tech will launch efforts in three cities, beginning with Chicago in 2020.

Founded by former Verizon Chief Information Officer Judith Spitz in 2016, Break Through Tech began as a public-private partnership between Cornell Tech and the City University of New York (CUNY) to build a pipeline of women pursuing studies and careers in computer science. The Cognizant U.S. Foundation grant will support national expansion of Break Through Tech's founding model, including:

- Development and implementation of computer science curriculum designed to attract and retain women and other traditionally underrepresented groups;
- Winter and summer internships at local tech employers designed as an on-ramp to employment;
- Support for computer science faculty at host institutions; and
- Ongoing engagement with local leaders and employer partners.

Based on statistics from the National Science Foundation's 2018 Report on science and engineering indicators, women received just 18 percent of computer science degrees in the United States. Since Break Through Tech's founding, the number of women graduating CUNY with bachelor's degrees in computer science has increased 94 percent; the percentage of women securing a summer technology internship—a critical path to employment in technology—has grown from less than 5 to 54 percent.

"Break Through Tech adopted an ecosystem approach starting in New York in collaboration with CUNY, and has shown significant progress in increasing the number of women pursuing degrees and careers in tech," said Judith Spitz, Executive Director of Break Through Tech. "By partnering with and activating both academia (supply side) and the tech industry (the demand side), we have not only transformed the lives of these young women but have opened new pathways into tech careers that will transform the tech industry. We are thrilled to be able to scale the model nationally thanks to the generous funding of the Cognizant U.S. Foundation and Pivotal Ventures."

Break Through Tech will launch in Chicago in Winter 2020 in partnership with the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), an institution with a respected and growing program in computer science research and education. UIC will begin offering Break Through Tech programming to its students in Summer 2020, including a new Introduction to Computer Science class and an immersive technology workshop for incoming students.

"Break Through Tech has developed a collaborative, systems-change approach to increasing the number of women in computer science, and the outcomes speak for themselves," said Kristen Titus, Executive Director of the Cognizant U.S. Foundation. "The Foundation is committed to advancing gender equity in the workforce, and we've seen the impact of Break Through Tech's work firsthand. We look forward to helping fuel its expansion alongside Pivotal Ventures, industry partners, and local institutions."

"By building pathways for women in key industries, such as technology and entrepreneurship, together we can accelerate women's power and influence and create greater innovation and economic opportunity for more people," said Renee Wittemyer, Director of Program Strategy and Investment at Pivotal Ventures. "We designed GET Cities to be an innovative approach that brings city-based stakeholders together to collaborate on a replicable model and accelerate the pace of change for women in tech nationally. It's our goal to create the space for companies, investors, and innovative thinkers to bring ideas that will make this a reality."

About Cognizant U.S. Foundation

The Cognizant U.S. Foundation is a 501(c)(3) private foundation supporting STEM education and technical skills training. Launched in 2018 with an initial $100 million investment from Cognizant, the Foundation has since awarded $21 million to organizations working to educate and train the next generation of workers in communities throughout the U.S.

About Break Through Tech

Launched at Cornell Tech, with support from Pivotal Ventures and Cognizant, the initiative supports curriculum innovation in higher education, career opportunities, and community support for women and other underrepresented groups in tech. It originated in 2016 as a program called Women in Technology & Entrepreneurship New York (WiTNY), created at Cornell Tech in partnership with the City University of New York (CUNY) and a broad set of industry partners. Now Break Through Tech is

replicating the highly innovative and effective ecosystem model it piloted in New York City to increase women's representation in computing grads in more cities across the United States.

SOURCE Cognizant U.S. Foundation

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