ITI

July 31, 2015

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

ITI is the global voice of the tech sector representing 60 of the most dynamic and innovative companies in the world, representing all industries within our sector. We are encouraged by and commend you for your decision to host the first ever White House demonstration day focused on diversity and inclusion. We look forward to being constructive partners in the dialogue on building a more inclusive 21st century economy. As the global leaders in technology, we embrace the fact that there are compelling economic and societal reasons to focus on these issues. Further, because of our sincere commitment to diversity, we know that we can make a positive difference both through the actions of our individual companies and through our collective action with other stakeholders across government, business, academia, and in our local communities. We are working hard on these issues, and are committed to doing more.

For these challenges there are no silver bullets; we will need to leverage the full creativity and ingenuity of our sector to find multifaceted answers to this multifaceted problem. Furthermore, to properly address these challenges our focus cannot only be on short-term gains, but we must also focus on a long-term commitment to perpetuate change.

With all this in mind, we outline below a series of commitments that ITI, as the global voice of the tech sector, will work to advance with our member companies.

We understand that our products and services will only get better and more useful if we invite all segments of society, and people from all over the world, to influence and create technology. Thus, consistent with the principles above, we undertake commitments centered on the following areas of focus:

Expanding the Pipeline

We will continue to build on and accelerate multifaceted approaches from K-12 to college and beyond to expand the STEM pipeline. As you have noted, Mr. President, there are nearly 500,000 open tech jobs in the tech sector today. Outside of the tech sector, there are also thousands of tech-related jobs that remain open. Many of these jobs require education and/or experience in computer science and engineering, fields where there is room for significant improvement in encouraging greater participation from diverse communities. By way of example, at the K-12 levels in 11 states, not a single African-American student sat for the computer science AP exam. Further, only 26 states allow computer science to count toward a math and science credit to earn a high school diploma, and 90 percent of schools do not teach it. At the college level, women currently earn just 18 percent of undergraduate degrees in computer science, down from 37 percent in 1985. To change this dynamic and expand the pipeline, companies are committed to improving the pipeline at multiple levels:

Broaden the STEM Pool

We will take steps to expand the pool of women and people of color who pursue STEM careers.   We know the nation's female and minority youth are a rich vein of talent we have not fully tapped. There are already tens of thousands of high-performing girls, African-American, and Latino students who, with the right exposure, educational opportunities, and nurturing, can be our future employees.

- These initiatives will build on strategies that succeed in bringing girls and young people of color into STEM fields and in sustaining their interests. Currently, nearly a third of high-performing students who begin pursuing a Bachelor's degree in STEM opt out of those majors by graduation.
- As a part of our work we will partner with other industries, including the media and entertainment industries, to shape the perception of STEM and to encourage more diverse participation.

Diversify Outreach in Hiring

We will partner with a broad range of universities across the country on programs that help to attract women and minorities and then retain them.

- These initiatives will include providing greater clarity to educational institutions, especially minority-serving institutions on the specific competencies that are key to gaining employment within the tech sector in a given field.
- Particular focus will be placed on identifying, partnering with, and helping to scale programs with proven track records of successfully placing diverse talent in tech companies.

Leverage Partnerships and Innovation

We are committed to hiring on the basis of competencies as well as credentials, and to partnering with education and training providers to ensure that students and workers will have the skills they need to succeed in the 21st century.

- This involves leveraging new technologies (e.g., online and blended learning, learning games, learning analytics, embedded assessment, digital tutors), new approaches to training (e.g., bootcamps, nano-degrees), and new financial models (e.g., pay for success).

Creating Cultures of Inclusion

We will continue to look at innovative ways to develop all levels of leaders and teach inclusive behaviors as part of leadership development. Research shows that simply raising awareness of about unconscious bias can lead to more conscious decision-making.

Reinforcing Our Values

The tech sector has long worked to embrace new and distinct ideas. We are committed to bringing the same embrace of difference and disruption to diversity and inclusion by embedding these ideals into our core business principles at every level. Thus, diversity will increasingly be a part of our values and culture and not a concept focused on compliance.

Leveraging Data Development to Transform Labor Markets

We will leverage data as a tool for expanding the pipeline and for evaluating our own progress. The acronym STEM and the phrase "tech jobs" are widely used in discussions across the private and public sectors, including in academia, without a common understanding of what those terms mean. We propose to solve for that problem in the following way:

Define Tech Jobs

To ensure that there is clarity in language and consistency in job definitions, and that we are measuring what we intend to, the sector will work to reach consistent definitions of various "tech jobs."

- This initiative would build on existing private sector and non-profit efforts and the White House's efforts to define STEM occupations across the entire government; as well as advance improvements in data compilation, including disaggregating the collection of data for African-American women and separating the integrated collection of data on computer and engineering jobs from positions in the life and physical sciences.
- The initiative will enable companies to leverage the data to benchmark their own progress.

ITI's member companies include the most innovative and leading technology brands in the world and we firmly believe that in order for our companies and our country to continue to lead, it must be through the creation of an inclusive 21st century economy. We look forward to working with your administration on these and other initiatives to do just that.

Sincerely,

Dean Garfield
President and CEO
Information Technology Industry Council (ITI)

About ITI. The Information Technology Industry Council (ITI) is the global voice of the tech sector. As the premier advocacy and policy organization for the world's leading innovation companies, ITI navigates the relationships between policymakers, companies, and non-governmental organizations, providing creative solutions that advance the development and use of technology around the world. Visit www.itic.org to learn more. Follow us on Twitter for the latest ITI news @ITI_TechTweets