

Toyota Connected's Women in Technology Group Pays It Forward

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Women make up nearly 60% of all college graduates, and of those who go to college, women earn college degrees at a higher percentage than men – 65% vs. 59%.

Yet, women account for just 18% of computer science degrees, and about the same percent account for executive roles.

Shravanthi Denthumdas, vice president of engineering at Toyota Connected, knows what it's like being a woman in a leadership role in engineering, on the outside looking in. She wants to make sure more women in computer science learn from her experiences, and more importantly, grow from them. That's why she and others created Toyota Connected's Women in Technology (WiT) group.

Denthumdas recalls when she first arrived in the Dallas Metroplex, she worked at a consulting firm where she was the only woman – and woman of color, in fact – at her level.

“It was nine or 10 men in that room, and I was the only woman there,” she said. “Throughout the day, all they used to talk about was basketball and football. Lunch conversations were always around things like beer on tap. I used to feel so left out.

“Anytime I had conversations about tech, it just felt so out of place.”

After Denthumdas had children, it added yet another dimension to her experience as a woman in a leadership position.

“I feel like I've reached a point in my career where I can now look back and help women navigate those scenarios,” she said. “And that has really been the motivation for me.”



Denthumdas partnered with Lisa Frey, Agile Services manager at Toyota Connected, to found WiT in June 2022, with a mission to provide support to like-minded women in their fields. Agile Services is a skillset that eliminates barriers and facilitates fast, yet precise, development – a product management style for the 21st century. Frey is bringing those skills with her to WiT.

“The group is about volunteers taking things that they love and running with them,” she said. “We’re paving the way, and then others will come in and do things they love, which promotes the group.”

Beyond meetings, WiT is using its collective power to promote training and conference opportunities for its members. First up was the [Grace Hopper Celebration](#) conference, where WiT members had the opportunity to network with other women in computer science professions. Grace Hopper was a rear admiral in the U.S. Navy and was one of the first women to receive a doctorate degree in mathematics, which facilitated her to work on the Mark I computer during World War II.

“Another team in WiT is doing some research on the kind of leadership training that we can provide,” Frey said. “It’s going to create some good success with this group.”

Denthumdas added, “It helps to see that there are women before you who have navigated the same challenges and have a similar lifestyle that you have, whether it’s with or without kids. They’ve navigated the same landscape, and they are successful.”

She wants to be there for her fellow coworkers. More so, she wants to facilitate their leapfrogging over her successes as they progress in their careers.

“I want all the women in WiT to have a platform to shine,” Denthumdas said.

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