

# Cindy Chen Awarded Scholarship from Aspire2STEAM

*Unwavering Passion for Data Science and Bias-Free Tech Applications Drive Scholarship Recipient, Cindy Chen*

DES MOINES, IA, UNITED STATES, July 8, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- "When we decided to expand our mission to fund STEAM [scholarships](#), Cindy Chen, is the type of scholar we had in mind," said Cheryl O'Donoghue, CEO at [Aspire2STEAM.org](#). "We believe that STEM, when powered by any of the arts, amplifies the positive impact gained from pursuing science, technology, engineering, or mathematics. Cindy Chen is on the planet to use her STEM knowledge for social good and her liberal arts background will give her an advantage in helping humanity solve complex problems."



Cindy Chen, Aspire2STEAM ASPIRER Scholarship Recipient

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Scholarship Recipient*

Cindy's professional goal is to be a data scientist, working in quantitative policy research or for a level of government to address the growing risks of automation in social services and financial markets. She is using her scholarship to help fund a Master of Arts in Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences (QMSS) from Columbia University. QMSS, recognized as a STEM program by the US

Government, is an interdisciplinary degree that focuses on quantitative research techniques with an emphasis on applied statistics and computer science.

Cindy is alarmed at the growing ubiquity of algorithms in determining access to critical services such as financial credit and social services. "If an automated service claims to be free of bias, the logic and methodology behind the automation should be dissected by people who intricately understand the statistics and computer science behind them," said Cindy Chen. "Otherwise, women applying for a credit card will continue to receive worse terms than men with similar credit, and racialized minorities will continue to get deprioritized for healthcare services."

Chen also sees herself contributing her technical expertise on algorithms to draft policies enforcing fair market practices and championing everyday public investors. Said Cindy, “We must address concerns over algorithms in financial markets, especially as financial trading becomes increasingly automated. Algorithmic trading by large institutional investors can come at the expense of individual investors saving for their retirement. The technical rigor of algorithmic trading makes it challenging for traditional policymakers to understand and adequately protect public interest.”

Cindy describes herself as a “late bloomer” to the field of STEM. While pursuing her undergraduate degree she enjoyed a wide range of subjects, including French literature, biology, math, and philosophy. In her sophomore year she was inspired to pursue business courses and became fascinated with those that blended corporate strategy and analytics where she learned how to leverage statistics and basic coding to solve real-world business problems.

Cindy was the first person in her family to go to college and because of financial and health constraints her family was not able to lend much support for her post-high-school aspirations. After graduating with her undergraduate degree, Cindy secured work and moved back home in order to pay off her student loans and assist her family financially and emotionally. She will use her scholarship to alleviate some of the stress of affording school, so she may focus her time on academics, extracurricular activities, and volunteering in the community.

“I am deeply passionate and highly involved in women’s advancement initiatives,” said Cindy. In school, she was selected as the co-chair of the Women in Management Club, where she helped create workshops, panel discussions, and reading discussions related to women’s professional development, and facilitated a mentorship program for 120 female students. She also received the Scotiabank Undergraduate Award for Studies in Violence Against Women and Children for her fundraising work for a local women’s shelter. Additionally, Cindy volunteered weekly at Western University’s Centre for Research and Education in Violence Against Women and Children (CREVAWC). In this capacity, she helped develop learning materials for the launch of their online courses on topics related to violence against women. She continues to volunteer at CREVAWC and contributes her time as a research assistant. Additionally, at her previous place of



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employment, Cindy was selected to be a member of the company's twelve-person Leading Women Committee, where she helped design and launch a pilot mentorship program for women beginning their careers.

Most recently Cindy was selected to be on the youth committee of a STEM non-profit's board of directors. "The organization is called hEr VOLUTION and they host training programs on coding and leadership skills for girls and young women in underserved parts of Toronto to encourage them to pursue STEM," said Cindy. "I haven't officially started just yet, but I'm looking forward to it in the near future."

#### About Aspire2STEAM

Aspire2STEAM.org (formerly known as Mission Sisters Who Work) is a charitable 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. We provide scholarships and mentoring to young women and girls who are working hard—aspiring—to achieve careers that require education in science, tech, engineering, the arts or math...and they could really use a hand up over the incredible barriers of student debt and rising education costs, and the real, ever-present opportunity barriers that still keep them out of most male-dominated industries. These young women are doing their part, let's help them by doing ours.

[Donate now](https://www.aspire2steam.org/donate/) at [Aspire2STEAM.org/donate/](https://www.aspire2steam.org/donate/). Your kindness is a catalyst for change and empowerment for the young women and girls we serve.

Cheryl O'Donoghue

Aspire2STEAM

[Cheryl@Aspire2STEAM.org](mailto:Cheryl@Aspire2STEAM.org)

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