Booking.com Introduces Scholarships for Universities in the U.S. at Inaugural Code-a-thon With Women Empowerment Activist and Actress Laura Dern

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Booking.com aims to support and advance the prospects of women in STEM careers, helping young women unlock their potential in technology through Women in Tech initiatives

NEW YORK, April 30, 2019 /PRNewswire/ -- Booking.com, one of the world's largest digital travel e-commerce companies, announced new scholarship initiatives with two leading universities in the U.S. last night during a reception at the brand's inaugural Women in Tech Code-a-thon with women empowerment activist and award-winning actress Laura Dern. Introduced to provide female students with necessary funding to advance their education in STEM, scholarships will be granted to undergraduate students at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia and postgraduate women students at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, studying subjects that include computer and information science, engineering, technology and mathematics. The grants will equal more than $350,000 across both universities, with scholarships starting in the 2019-20 academic year. This initiative furthers Booking.com's commitment to helping bridge the gender divide within the tech sector.

The scholarship announcement was made at Booking.com's inaugural Women in Tech Code-a-thon, which took place in San Francisco, April 28 - 29, 2019, for young women interested in studying technology and pursuing a career in the industry. The Code-a-thon brought together 10 young women from across the country between the ages of 16 - 19 for a two-day technology immersion with coding classes, mentorship, hands-on training and more, to help prepare them for their future studies. The event took place at the CNET Smart Home in the heart of San Francisco and culminated with a reception hosted by women empowerment activist and award-winning actress Laura Dern, who met with the young women to learn more about their experience at the Code-a-thon.

Laura Dern, the host of the inaugural Code-a-thon remarked: "I'm beyond thrilled to be a part of such an impactful event for young women. I've played many strong female characters throughout my career, but nothing compares to the strength and passion I've seen from these incredible young women today. I'm proud to work with Booking.com on the inspiring initiatives they are doing to uplift and empower women in technology."

Recent research from Booking.com shows that despite Technology being an appealing industry for women overall, many have reservations about entering the tech sector. Women still perceive their gender to be detrimental to pursuing a career in tech, with more than half (52%) attributing this to the tech industry's largely male-dominated workforce.

"Technology is one of the key drivers of social change and economic growth today, and the strong under-representation of women studying STEM subjects and participating in the tech workforce threatens to deepen the current social divide and further accentuate gender stereotypes," says Gillian Tans, Chief Executive Officer of Booking.com. "This is why I believe it is so important to encourage and empower more young women to pursue and advance their tech education and start a tech career. The more women we have engaging with STEM, the greater chance we will have to turn these stereotypes in tech around and make the industry a more welcoming place for people of all backgrounds to thrive."

According to a 2018 report by global consultancy McKinsey[1], in the U.S., women make up just 23% of high school Advanced Placement computer science exam takers, 19% of computer and information science Bachelor's degree recipients, and 26% of the computing workforce.[1] This is indicative of the under-representation of women in many other regions of the world, which, coupled with a growing shortage of digitally skilled workers, could contribute to challenges in how companies progress within the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The European Commission believes there could be as many as 756,000 unfilled jobs in the European Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector by 2020.[2]

Gillian Tans, Booking.com CEO said "Our research has shown us that despite changes being made to encourage more women into tech, they still face more challenges in the industry compared with men. It is important that we support and encourage women at the early stages of their careers to ensure they receive the skills development, training, mentorship and access to role models that they have the right foundations to enter the tech sector. The institutions we have chosen to partner with for the Booking.com scholarships all demonstrate an ongoing commitment to promoting diversity in STEM and we believe that these partnerships will provide many talented young women with the boost they need to succeed in the industry, helping us to support and develop the next generation of female tech talent."

President Mary Schmidt Campbell, Ph.D of Spelman College said: "At a time when technology is critical to global markets and pervasive in our daily lives, we are excited about the opportunities our STEM students will receive via the Booking.com Women in Tech Scholarships. Financial support and career development activities such as mentoring by Booking.com employees will help ensure will ensure that these students graduate with a competitive edge. Prepared for life and a career as masters of technology, these students will enter the workforce and increase the number of African-American women that are currently drastically underrepresented in the STEM fields."

Kavita Bala, Professor and Chair of Computer Science at Cornell University, said, "We are delighted that Booking.com has selected Cornell CS as a recipient of scholarships for three of our female postgraduate students. Encouraging and supporting more young women to study STEM subjects such as Computer Science is a key priority for Cornell CS, and the Women in Tech Scholarships will play a crucial role in helping us achieve this ambition. We look forward to building a lasting, successful partnership with Booking.com."

Booking.com first introduced scholarships in 2017 for students at Oxford University in the UK and Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands. The application process will differ for each university based on their own internal scholarship process, with criteria selection balanced on both merit and means. The scholarships will be announced in October 2019.

About Booking.com
Established in 1996 in Amsterdam, Booking.com B.V. has grown from a small Dutch start-up to one of the largest travel e-commerce companies in the world. Part of Booking Holdings Inc. (NASDAQ: BKNG), Booking.com now employs more than 17,500 employees in 200+ offices in 70 countries

worldwide.

With a mission to empower people to experience the world, Booking.com invests in digital technology that helps take the friction out of travel. At Booking.com, we connect travelers with the world's largest selection of incredible places to stay, including everything from apartments, vacation homes, and family-run B&Bs to 5-star luxury resorts, tree houses and even igloos. The Booking.com website and mobile apps are available in 43 languages, offer over 28 million total reported listings, including more than 5.7 million listings of homes, apartments and other unique places to stay, and covers more than 147,000 destinations in 227 countries and territories worldwide.

Each day, more than 1.5 million room nights are reserved on our platform. So whether traveling for business or leisure, customers can instantly book their ideal place to stay quickly and easily with Booking.com, without booking fees and backed up by our promise to price match. Via our customer experience team, customers can reach Booking.com 24/7 for assistance and support in over 43 languages, any time of the day or night.

Follow us on Twitter and Instagram, like us on Facebook, and for the latest news, data and insights, please visit our global media room.

[1] McKinsey & Company report, "Closing the tech gender gap through philanthropy and corporate social responsibility," September 2018

[2] European Commission, "E-Skills and Jobs in the Digital Age," May 2017

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