

7 Questions for Elisa Torres Durney

Elisa Torres Durney has completed a three-month work placement at QAI Ventures – and she is definitely someone to watch. She is already helping to shape what our future will look like.



Elisa Torres Durney, Founder of Girls in Quantum, Intern at QAI Ventures

Who are you, and what originally led you to founding Girls in Quantum?

I'm Elisa Torres Durney, intern at QAI Ventures. I am originally from Chile and currently studying Electrical and Computer Engineering at Duke University. I founded Girls in Quantum in 2022 after noticing how few young women, especially outside major research hubs, had any real exposure to quantum science or a sense that they belonged in the field. What started as a small initiative has grown into a global community of over 8,500 members across more than 60 countries, and that growth has taught me as much as any classroom ever could.

What did a typical day look like during your internship at QAI Ventures?

Honestly, no two days looked the same! which is part of what made the internship so energizing. One day I might be helping coordinate our awesome Summit, and the next I'd be deep in a partnership agreement or documenting coaching notes for a portfolio founder. I worked closely with the accelerator, investment, and communications teams, so I was constantly moving between operational details and bigger picture ecosystem building.

You're an international advocate for more women in quantum technology. How do you think this technology will change the way we work in the future?

Quantum technology will likely reshape entire industries, but I think its biggest impact will be more foundational. It will change who gets to participate in shaping the future of computing. If we bring more diverse voices into the field now, while it's still being defined, we have a real chance to build something more inclusive from the ground up rather than trying to fix it later.

What will you take away from your time at QAI Ventures that stays with you, even as you move on to what's next?

I think it's the reminder that great ideas need great infrastructure around them to actually succeed, whether that's funding, mentorship, or just the right introduction at the right time. Watching how much care goes into supporting founders here at QAI Ventures, from the accelerator programs to the investment side, has shaped how I think about building and scaling for startups and companies.

How would you explain what QAI Ventures, or uptownBasel more broadly, actually does to a friend?

I usually say it's a place that helps quantum and next generation computing startups go from a great idea to an actual company. It is a like a pot full of ingredients! It combines funding, hands on mentorship, and access to a global network of investors and industry partners, which, for QAI are across Switzerland, Singapore, and Canada.

What did you enjoy most about uptownBasel or QAI Ventures?

The people, without a doubt!! Having lunch on the rooftop with the team every day was awesome, filled with laughs and fun storytelling. I also loved being surrounded by founders, scientists, and investors who genuinely believe in what they're building; this made every day feel purposeful. I

also enjoyed being part of the Quantum Global Summit preparations, seeing the creativity and precision required to bring the whole ecosystem together.

From the perspective of a young, internationally connected STEM advocate, what do you feel uptownBasel is still missing?

I'd love to see even more structured pathways for students and early career talent to plug into the ecosystem! This especially through smaller touchpoints like workshops or mentorship circles. There's so much appetite among young people internationally to get involved in quantum, and uptownBasel is well positioned to become a go to entry point for that next generation.

Thank you, Elisa, for your energy and warmth, and for everything you have built. We're cheering you on as you take this mission forward.