

SANDRA DIAZ

ELECTRONIC SYSTEMS ENGINEER

Sandra had a childhood filled not with dolls, but with chains of transistors and resistors, not to mention small robots moving around the house! For this she credits her electronics engineer father, a researcher himself, who always encouraged Sandra to find innovative solutions to problems.

Sandra was appreciated by male colleagues when studying in Mexico, despite times when it was hard to be heard. In such cases, Sandra advises, “You have to say, I am here because I want to be here, I am good in what I do and I do my best,” to gain attention.

Single mum and researcher

Single mum Sandra faced challenges in budgeting, and balancing work and life. While in Canada for her master’s, Sandra nearly gave up, but regained her resolve and moved to Germany, despite not knowing the language.

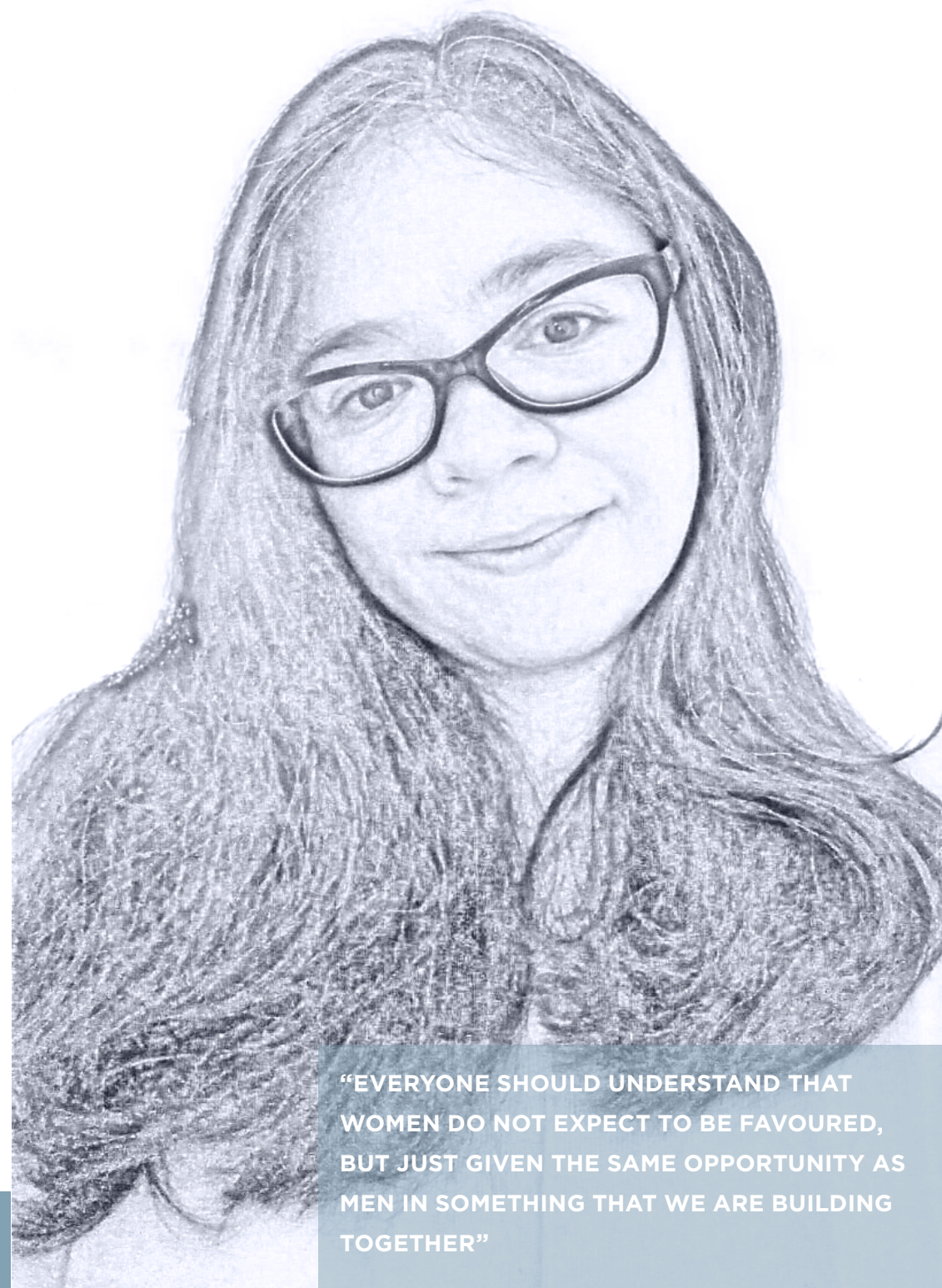
For the first time, Jülich has given Sandra a 50:50 gender work environment, in the SimLab Neuroscience team. Sandra enjoys, when guys and girls meet, exploring thought-provoking disruptive ideas. Experiences form the man or woman, not necessarily gender, she says. Also, working with large computers, is “just like landing in paradise!” Sandra views as a role model her boss, Abigail Morrison, both a great researcher and a mother of three, who understands Sandra’s and her 13 year-old son’s needs. Fortunately, Sandra now has a partner, an accountant acquainted with how research works, who encourages her career development and helps out when she has to travel. A couple is a team that shares both the responsibility and joy of being with children as they grow and learn.

Sandra is an HBP Student Representative and relishes the challenge of building the infrastructure, as well as being proud of the Education Programme. If enough women demand a research career and a family, Sandra believes research institutions will increasingly accommodate them.

Don’t give up!

Well-designed programmes, emphasizing the benefits to both genders, are necessary to challenge entrenched gender stereotypes, while avoiding the perception that this is “just another feminist movement”. Everyone should understand that women do not expect to be favoured, but just given the same opportunity as men in something that we are building together.

Finally, Sandra says that she has won through and encourages other women never to give up. Specific gender equalization achievements to date include the [posting on Twitter](#) of photos of seven women working in Jülich at the interface of neuroscience and HPC in the SimLab Neuroscience and in the Human Brain Project (HBP) Subproject 7, High-Performance Analytics and Computing Platform. The posting aims to dispel the impression that supercomputing science is mainly for men. #WeAreHPC @women_in_hpc.



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