

APS Committee on Minorities

2017 Annual Report

Chair: Edmundo Garcia-Solis

Members: Ivy K. Jones, Angela Little, Carol Scarlett, Marie Lopez del Puerto, Casey Miller, Charles H. McGruder, Jesús Pando, William Ratcliff II, Garfield T. Warren

The Committee on Minorities (COM) is dedicated to increasing the participation of underrepresented minorities in physics, recommends and supervises programs and studies relevant to this charge. In addition to multiple online meetings, the Committee held face-to-face meetings in March and September of 2017.

During the report period COM undertook the following projects:

1. APS National Mentoring Community (NMC)

The NMC seeks to increase the number of underrepresented minority students who complete Bachelor's degrees in physics. The NMC facilitates mentoring relationships between African American, Hispanic American, and Native American undergraduate physics students and local physics faculty who serve as mentors. The program identifies mentors throughout the country who can establish a personal relationship with students and provide them with guidance and support as they navigate their academic careers. The NMC launched in May 2015 and currently includes 177 mentors and 103 mentees. The program provides support to both mentors and mentees and sponsors an annual conference. The NMC project includes a needs-based scholarship fund that mentors can call on to assist physics students in financial need. This year, in lieu of an annual conference, the NMC co-sponsored the Día de La Física event with the National Society of Hispanic Physicists on October 21 in Salt Lake City and will also co-sponsor the National Society of Black Physicists meeting on November 3-4 in Atlanta.

2. APS Bridge Program, Partnership Institutions

COM is working with the APS staff to select and evaluate graduate physics departments that would like to become Partner Institutions with the APS Bridge Program. The Bridge Program seeks to match URM and other non-traditional students who have completed a BA or BS in physics with graduate programs in physics. Partner Institutions can admit students with BA or BS degrees directly into their own graduate programs or can accept students who have completed an APS Bridge program. In either case the partner institution commits to provide mentoring and other appropriate support to the students. COM's role is to evaluate and advise departments in providing appropriate support to these students.

3. Special APS Presidential Session on Diversity at the March Meeting

During the 2017 March meeting COM and APS, under the guidance of past COM Chair Nadia Mason, organized the session "The Value of Diversity in Physics: Talking Points for Supreme Court Cases and Beyond," bringing together experts to discuss why diversity is critical to the advancement of physics and society. There were opening remarks by APS President Laura Greene and an invited talk by APS Past President Homer Neal, who worked with COM to organize the session. Additional invited talks were given by Ed Bertschinger (MIT), Sheen Levine (Columbia), Jim Gates (University of Maryland), and Valerie Otero (CU-Boulder). The very well attended session attracted about 100 people.

4. Summit for Physics Chairs at HBCUs and BSIs

COM organized a one-day Summit on September 28 in Atlanta for Physics Chairs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Black Serving Institutions (BSIs) to generate specific recommendations for APS to better engage with and serve these physics departments. The primary motivation for the summit was strong concern over the falling numbers of BS physics degrees awarded to African Americans, especially given that numbers of white, Asian, and Hispanic American students have been steadily increasing for more than a decade. The agenda of the summit minimized presentation time in order to hold a series of focused discussions on key topics identified by COM. Specific outcomes were identified for each topic area, which included actionable recommendations for APS in four major topic areas: (1) strengthen relationships with HBCU/BSI physics chairs, (2) convene HBCU/BSI chairs periodically and build a network to foster discussion, (3) disseminate effective practices for recruitment and retention of physics majors, and (4) support threatened HBCU/BSI physics departments through advocacy. A report summarizing the discussions and recommendations of the summit will be sent to all HBCU/BSI chairs, members of COM, and other participants of the summit. COM will present the report to the APS Council and seek their acceptance of the report and recommendations. COM will oversee implementation of the recommendations, and will continue working with the Chairs.

4. Other Activities

In addition to the above projects, COM continues to:

- Organize sessions at both the APS March and April meetings, focusing on topics of interest to URM physicists and those who support these groups.
- Co-sponsor receptions and other events at the APS March and April Meetings, with the National Society of Black Physicists and National Society of Hispanic Physicists.
- Nominate URM candidates for major APS honors and awards as well as provide members for the selection committee for the APS Bouchet award.

Acknowledgements

The members of the APS Committee on Minorities thank Miranda Bard, Women & Education Programs Coordinator, Erika E. Alexander Brown, Bridge Program Manager, Brián Clash, Bridge Program Coordinator, Theodore Hodapp, Director of Project Development and Senior Advisor to Education and Diversity, Monica Plisch, Director of Education and Diversity, Kathyne Sparks Woodle, Education and Diversity Programs Manager, Heather C. Styer, Diversity Programs Coordinator, for their continuing support and unflinching dedication to increasing minority participation in physics.