



Committee on Minorities in Physics
of the American Physical Society
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COM 2012 2012 APS Committee on Minorities in Physics Annual Report, L. Strolger (01/23/13)

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The COM remains active in its efforts aimed at increasing participation of underrepresented minorities in physics. The new organizational structures instituted this year have allowed the COM to focus on a particular set of interests, and enhance our activities in areas of mentoring, scholarship enhancement, professional development, networking, and the COM site visits. We have also established a “Friends of COM” emailing list, to improve communication with the broader community, and to encourage broader participation in mentorship and professional development.

APS Minority Scholarship

The COM reviewed scholarship applications, and selected candidates for renewals and mentoring scholarships. In coordination with APS staff, the committee identified 22 applicants for new scholarship awards, and approved 20 renewals. This year we piloted an honorable mention category to recognize the exemplary performance of applicants to whom we were financially unable to extend scholarships. The goal has been to extend our mentoring efforts to the honorable recognition awardees, utilizing the Friends of COM community to help mentor and encourage these minority students to continue to pursue degrees in physics.

The APS minority scholarship continues to be an important activity, supporting students and forging relationships between senior physicists and beginning students. The review process (advertising, assembling and vetting applications, planning review process, and notifying winners) was greatly facilitated by APS staff member, Arlene Modeste Knowles.

Site Visits

Profs. Mary James and Yesim Darisi participated in the CSWP’s recent climate site visit of the Department of Physics at Yale University. The COM feels it is now poised to reinvigorate its independent climate for minorities site visits to interested departments and laboratories. Further, we expect this program will be utilized in the evaluation of participating and prospective departments for the APS Bridge Program.

APS Meeting Sessions

The COM co-sponsored sessions with the CSWP at both the 2012 March and April meetings. Together, we worked with the LGBTQ group on the “Sexual and Gender Diversity Issues in Physics” session, and with the FED we developed the “STEM Outreach to Underrepresented Communities” session. Both panel-led discussions were very well attended. The COM will continue to lead discussions on minority issues, and to offer support for sessions on inclusivity and diversity in our field.

In addition, the COM expects to become more involved in the regular meetings of APS sections and forums with direct importance to the COM community. Our plans include sessions for the upcoming Southeastern Section (SESAPS) and Mid-Atlantic Section (MASAPS) annual meetings, and we anticipate involvement in future Conference for Undergraduate Women in Physics (CUWIP) meetings.

Additional Activities

The COM is pleased with the development of the APS Minority Bridge Program, and sees it as an important step in improving minority participation in physics. The Committee looks forward to further endorsing this program, offering its guidance and assessment, and providing evaluating site visits. The COM is happy to endorse the newly developed APS/IBM Research Internships for Underrepresented Minority Students. The Committee will invest effort in advertising the opportunity on its website, in emailing lists, and in other forums, and offers its assistance in mentorship. The COM recognizes the vital importance of national meetings for underrepresented professionals and students, and believes the APS can play a strong role in developing and stewarding these meetings. The Committee expects to continue its work with the National Society of Hispanic Physicists, the National Society of Black Physicists, and other leaders in this area to develop mutual opportunities, joint meetings, and other cooperative activities.

Acknowledgements

The COM has received excellent support in virtually every aspect of its activities from Arlene Knowles, Career and Diversity Programs Administrator. Arlene has been exceptionally accommodating of the committee members and has been a tireless advocate of the APS minority scholars. Dr. Theodore W. Hodapp, APS Director of Education and Diversity, has a valuable asset to COM and APS diversity efforts. COM has benefitted from his participation and commitment to sustaining and developing new efforts to promote diversity.