The CSWP Climate Site Visit Program

May 31, 2013

Susan K. Blessing
Florida State University
Chair, CSWP

Committee on the Status of Women in Physics
Committee on the Status of Women in Physics

APS, through the Committee on the Status of Women in Physics (CSWP), is committed to encouraging the recruitment, retention, and career development of women physicists at all levels.

Susan Blessing (FSU) – Chair
Nina Abramzon (Cal Poly, Pomona)
Jill Foley (Nova Photonics)
Mary Hockaday (Los Alamos)
Kathy Prestridge (Los Alamos)
Amanda Peet (U. Toronto)
Larry Pinsky (U. Houston)
Marianna Safronova (U. Delaware)
Vidhya Ramachandran (Qualcom)
Ted Hodapp (APS)
Monica Plisch (APS)
Deanna Ratnikova (APS)
Outline

Committee on the Status of Women in Physics

CSWP programs

Climate Site Visit Program

(Some) Best practices
CSWP Programs

Woman Physicist of the Month
17 women recognized so far

May 2013
Heide Doss – Consultant and Education Specialist

New poster

March and April APS meetings
  Invited sessions
  Networking lunches/receptions
  Professional skills development workshops
  Childcare grants

Female-friendly departments
  Self-reported by department
  142 graduate departments to date
Guest Editorial: Defensive Driving at Work
Kathy Prestridge, Los Alamos National Laboratory and CSWP Member

When you plan a road trip, you carefully plan your route, where you will stop, what you will see, and you ensure that your vehicle is ready for the trip. You may even load up your phone or gadget with music, books, and podcasts to help make the ride more enjoyable. Commuting to work each day, you know your route, and you watch the behavior of others carefully. If there is road work, you try to get around it, and you are prepared for detours. Even though these course changes are annoying, you take them in stride and are able to get to your destination. So why is it that when faced with an obstacle at work, we often get so discouraged that we give up or let it stop us from achieving our goals? Why would it seem silly to pull your car over and cry because of a roadblock, but seem perfectly reasonable to get extremely upset and frustrated by a similar obstacle at work?

I get angry when I’m driving and I see people talking on the phone, texting, not signaling, weaving, and doing other dangerous or illegal behaviors. I actually made it into a game with my kids, and we guess who will intersect with a black hole of awfulness. Let’s face it: our work goals in the same way that we might take a road trip. We must be able to avoid the pitfalls and bad drivers so that we can get to our destination safely and empowered. What are the keys to success? 1) Set a destination; 2) Figure out your route and backup route; 3) Define some rules of the road.

1. Set a Destination
You should have both short-term and long-term career goals. Many of us in research have no problem planning out a project, but when it comes to our career goals, we don’t take the time or maybe think that excellent research and publications will make everything fall into place. I often remind my postdocs that research and publications will make everything fall into place. I often remind my postdocs that your direct supervisor or close coworker will have a horrible, intolerable behavior. In the best case, your direct supervisor, all of your coworkers, and you, have implicit biases that don’t allow people to realize their full potential (Mino-Becerril et al., “Science faculty’s subtle gender biases favor male students,” Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci., Sept. 17, 2012). A defensive driving metaphor can help: try to avoid the really bad situations and people by carefully choosing your route.

Despite your best efforts, sometimes your route will intersect with a black hole of awfulness. Let’s figure out how to deal with the awfulness and achieve our work goals in the same way that we might take a road trip. We must be able to avoid the pitfalls and bad drivers so that we can get to our destination safely and empowered. What are the keys to success? 1) Set a destination; 2) Figure out your route and backup route; 3) Define some rules of the road.

II. Resolve Obstacles

I believe science outreach is a way towards both increasing appreciation of and excitement about physics that can change our lives! Physics is the most basic and fundamental science and that physics leads to great discoveries—discovery that can change our lives! This feature showcases five female and/or minority physicists who are striving towards the goals of both increasing appreciation of and excitement about physics and also serving as role models for under-represented members of the physics community. Their dedication to science education and outreach is inspiring and motivational, and I hope that readers find their stories a source of hope for the bright future of physics.
CSWP Programs

Blewett Fellowship
To enable women to return to physics research careers after having had to interrupt those careers.

Conferences for Undergraduate Women in Physics
Florida State University
Louisiana State University
Penn State University
Stony Brook University
U.C. Berkeley
University of Chicago
University of Maryland/NIST
University of Utah

Michelle Ntampaka
Carnegie Mellon U.

Sujatha Sampath
U. Wisconsin-Milwaukee

U. Illinois U-C

Colorado School of Mines

U. Central Florida
Climate Site Visit Program

Goals

Identify a set of generic problems commonly experienced by minority and/or women physicists.

Intervene to solve many of these generic problems.

Address problems arising in the particular physics department or lab visited and help improve the climate for minorities or women (both students and faculty) in the facility.

We want your department to be more welcoming for women – which makes your department more welcoming for everyone.

History

Visits began in 1990
Visit 1 – 6 institutions per year (usually 2 – 4)
Some visits in conjunction with Committee on Minorities
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Susan Blessing
The visit

Department chair or lab director makes request
visits where these people are invested are MUCH better
provides enrollment, hiring, … information

Site team leader is selected by CSWP subcommittee chair
she assembles the team of 3 – 4 people

Date is set
usually one (full!) day for a university

AIP sends survey to department members
team gets results, not department

Meet with all constituencies
dean, chair, departmental faculty admin,
untenured/tenured faculty, staff, postdocs,
grad and undergrad students
(separately with men and women)

chair again at end

Department pays for
survey and team travel
After the visit

Confidential report belongs to chair
  Report contains findings and specific recommendations;
  due within three months of the visit

Written follow-up from chair in 18 months

The most successful site visits are those where the majority of the department is invested in making improvements.

  Or is at least willing to consider that things could be improved.

  Very defensive faculty tend to dominate meetings with the team by explaining how good things are and how well-run everything is.

  Others then feel as if they cannot speak up.
The chair and other faculty leaders in the department should set a high standard in treating all faculty with respect, and promoting a positive environment for everyone.

Communicate to everyone in the department why climate issues are important and how a welcoming and mutually supportive environment will help the department recruit and support the best students and faculty. The entire faculty and student body plays a part in determining the atmosphere in the department.

Community is very important, and sometimes it has to be “encouraged.”

Improve transparency:
- departmental governance
- explicit, clear and written policies for tenure and promotion
- clear and reasonable policies for parental leave
- integrate new people into the department
(Some) Best practices – hiring

Be certain search committee (especially chair) understands the recommendations and rules

Don’t make the field overly narrow

Contact people individually

Ask the faculty for input (not just the search committee)

Encourage excellent young people to apply early and be willing to hire early

Consider the two-body problem in advance

Tell all interviewees what the institution’s policies are

Do not make assumptions about people’s personal lives

Remember that you are looking for the best overall person for your department – and “best” does not have a single definition.
(Some) Best practices – faculty

One or two women is not enough to change the climate
  unless there are very few faculty

Help women develop leadership skills
  but don’t overburden them

Be sure women are being nominated for awards
  e.g. APS Fellowship

Ensure women have comparable space, resources, matching funds, and salary as others at the same level in the department.

Reward people for a job well done
  noting that there is a very large variety of tasks which need to be done well in an institution
(Some) Best practices – graduate students

Keep your curriculum up-to-date – allow for flexibility

Informal but structured interaction opportunities

Mentoring and career advice

Chair should meet with students yearly

Provide an ombudsperson

TA training should include sexual harassment – from both sides

faculty-student

student-student

not just for students planning academic careers

not a bad idea for faculty, too
(Some) Best practices – undergraduates

Proactive advising – encouragement, direction, suggestions
  lots of stuff you think is obvious, isn’t
  women earning A- grades think they are failing
  men earning C grades think they are just fine

Strongly encourage undergraduate research
  give tips on finding a professor

Provide information on graduate school and GRE regularly

Mentoring and career advice
  not just for students planning academic careers

Identify an ombudsperson

Student study room/lounge

Pay attention to women in class
  don’t tolerate even low-level harassment
  assign groups, at least at the beginning
Undergraduate research

Conference Experiences for Undergraduates
Local poster session
Conference for Undergraduate Women in Physics
SPS regional meeting
Conclusions

Leadership and communication are very important

Consider a site visit – we can help

contact Deanna Ratnikova at women@aps.org to start the process

Contact me at sblessing@fsu.edu if you have suggestions for CSWP or questions for me

More information is available at

http://www.aps.org/programs/women/