



Committee on Minorities in Physics
of the American Physical Society
One Physics Ellipse, College Park, MD 20740

COM 2011

2011 APS Committee on Minorities in Physics Annual Report

Dr. William J. Evans

Chairperson

WILLIAM J. EVANS

Lawrence Livermore National Lab

THEDA DANIELS-RACE

Louisiana State University

YESIM DARICI

Florida International University

PETER J. DELFYETT

University of Central Florida

MARY JAMES

Reed College

RENE LOPEZ

University of North Carolina

Chapel Hill

MEL SABELLA

Chicago State University

LOU STROLGER

Western Kentucky University

MANI TRIPATHI

University of California, Davis

Liaisons from the APS:

TED HODAPP

Director, Education & Diversity

ARLENE MODESTE KNOWLES

Career & Diversity Programs

Administrator

The APS Committee on Minorities (COM) was very active during 2011. COM has been active in public policy advocacy, in addition to its traditional efforts aimed at increasing the participation of underrepresented minorities in physics. New organizational structures were also created to enhance the impact of COM on issues of interest.

APS Minority Scholarship

COM continued its role of reviewing scholarship applications, selecting candidates/renewals and mentoring scholarship recipients. In coordination with APS staff, COM identified 27 applicants for new scholarship awards and approved 18 renewals. COM is exploring possibilities for providing honorable recognition and mentoring to a larger group of applicants, beyond the scholarship recipients. 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 & vetting applications, planning review process and notifying winners) was greatly facilitated by APS staff member, Arlene Knowles.

COM response to proposed changes in NSF proposal review criteria

COM, led by Prof. Theda Daniels-Race, submitted a response to the National Science Board (NSB) regarding the proposed revision of the National Science Foundation Review Principles and Criteria. The COM response emphasized the broad importance of three core areas, which included “increased participation of underrepresented minorities.” Dr. Suresh, director of the NSF, sent a response acknowledging and thanking COM for the input. Copies of the letters are available from COM.

APS March Meeting Session

Prof. Louis Strolger organized a very popular and well-attended session, “Topics in Alternative Energy,” at the 2011 APS March Meeting (Dallas, TX). The session featured leading-edge research in alternative energy and highlighted the contributions of physicists who are also members of underrepresented groups.

APS April Meeting Session

Prof. Yesim Darici organized a very successful session at the April APS Meeting (Anaheim, CA) titled, “Initiatives for Broadening Participation of Minorities in Graduate Level Physics.” The session was jointly sponsored with the Committee on the Status of Women in Physics (CSWP).

New Organizational Structures

In order to enhance the impact of COM, new subcommittee structures and a Friends-of-COM list were created. The COM subcommittees were created to place enhanced emphasis on particular interest. These subcommittees are:

- Mentoring
- Scholarship Enhancement
- Professional Development for Practicing Physicists
- Site Visits
- Student Website & Communications

The Friends-of-COM list was created to maintain contact with our friends and colleagues who are committed to the goals and missions of COM. It will be used to disseminate information and call on our broader community for assistance and support. Friend-of-COM should be a resource for a larger group of contributors to COM initiatives, such as mentoring, grant writing, site visits and more.

Fall 2011 Gazette

Prof. Yesim Darici served as the guest editor and contributor of the lead article for the Fall 2011 issues of the APS CSWP&COM Gazette. Her article was titled, "Community and Learning Environment Matters for a Successful Undergraduate Program." This article highlighted the dramatic successes in increased enrollments and achievements of students in the Physics Department at Florida International University (FIU). As a Minority Serving Institution (MSI), the example of the FIU Physics Department points out unique approaches and resources to achieve increased participation of underrepresented minorities in physics. The Fall issue of the Gazette contained several thematically related articles contributed by members of the physics community, COM & CSWP members. APS Staffer, Deanna Ratnikova, provided excellent support in preparation and coordination of this issue of the Gazette.

Additional Activities

COM Chair (William Evans) attended the APS Unit Convocation and Capitol Hill Visit day. The unit convocation provided an excellent introduction to the support resources at APS headquarters, the society's strategic plans, and organizational leadership. The Capitol Hill visits included visits to the congressional offices of U.S. Congresswoman Barbara Lee, U.S. Congresswoman McNerney, and U.S. Congressman Mike Thompson and U.S. Senator Feinstein. The office staffers were exceptionally welcoming and the visits were a valuable opportunity to convey the interests of COM and APS.

The Chair of COM also attended a couple of CSWP lead events to enhance the interaction between the two committees. One event was a general meeting of the CSWP membership. The organization and initiatives of the CSWP were very impressive and the COM chair hopes some of the approaches and organizational structures can be duplicated in COM to foster more activities. The second event was a stakeholders meeting to evaluate the impact, value and potential enhancements of the CSWP Gender-Equity discussions. This was a very valuable meeting and had important insights for re-invigorating the COM site visit program. There is great value in maintain an ongoing and dialog and exchange with CSWP.

Acknowledgements

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.