

Committee on Minorities

2013 Annual Report

Mary James, COM Chair

The Committee on Minorities (COM) is dedicated to increasing the participation of underrepresented minorities in physics. In 2013, COM undertook five major projects:

1) APS COM Minority Scholarship Program

The COM reviewed scholarship applications from approximately 100 college students who would enter their freshman, sophomore, or junior years in college and planned to major in physics. The COM awarded 27 first time scholarships and 14 second year renewal scholarships.

2) Survey of Community Opinions on Barriers to Minority Participation in Physics

COM designed and implemented a comprehensive survey to solicit the advice of the broader physics community on identifying barriers to participation of underrepresented minorities (URM's) at all stages of training and professional work. Survey respondents were asked to identify barriers to URM participation at the undergraduate, graduate, and post-doctoral levels as well as in the academy, research laboratories, and industry. Respondents were also asked to identify those barriers that might be most effectively mitigated by APS COM initiatives. The survey was completed by over 300 members of the physics community including those working in colleges, universities, government laboratories, and industry.

3) APS Bridge Program Consultation

The COM worked with APS staff members in reviewing the progress of the APS Bridge Program. In particular, COM members helped to review applications from universities to serve as new APS Bridge Program sites. COM also discussed preliminary plans for COM to play a significant role in selecting and monitoring APS Bridge Program partnership institutions.

4) Evaluation of Scholarship Program

COM and the APS staff commissioned a qualitative evaluation of the efficacy of the APS COM minorities scholarship program in playing a pivotal role in the choice of undergraduate scholarship winners to complete undergraduate degrees in physics.

5) APS National Mentoring Community

After considering both the initial survey results and the evaluation of the efficacy of the APS COM minorities scholarship program, COM reaffirmed its commitment to using

significant resources to support students in completing undergraduate degrees in physics. COM decided to explore replacing the APS COM scholarship program with a National Mentoring Community aimed at building and supporting a core of well-trained mentors to undergraduate physics majors at campuses across the nation.

Ongoing Programs

In addition to the five projects above, COM continues to hold session at both the APS March and April meetings, focusing on topics of interest to URM physicists, physics students, and those who mentor and support these groups. COM also nominates URM candidates for major APS honors and awards as well as providing members to the selection committee for the APS Bouchet award. COM members also contribute articles to the APS Gazette publication.

Acknowledgements

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