

FORUM ON GRADUATE STUDENT AFFAIRS

AMERICAN PHYSICAL SOCIETY

The APS Forum on Graduate Student Affairs encourages a free exchange of ideas among graduate students and the greater scientific community by providing opportunities for meetings, electronic discussion, and access to a permanent archive of member ideas and programs.

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NEWSLETTER

JULY 2012



Vikram Singh Prasher

Greetings from the Editor

Dear FGSA members,

Now entering its second decade, the APS Forum on Graduate Student Affairs continues to be a powerful outlet for graduate students nationwide. This newsletter will serve its aim by providing a platform for students to continue to voice concerns, ideas, and promote a wide range of career opportunities within and outside the field.

With this issue I begin my tenure as editor of the FGSA Newsletter. I intend to put out two issues per year; one in late spring and one late fall. Among the regular features, beginning in the next issue, will also be lists of travel awards and future conferences that are relevant to graduate students.

I would like to begin by sending out a special thanks to Dr. Amy Flatten, for providing the FGSA with an insightful article concerning the various activities carried out by the APS Office of International Affairs. Similarly, I would like to thank the many past, and current, members of the forum for sharing their experiences—whether it was organizing a conference, or attending one of many meetings—with the community. Their dedication and vision has helped bring the forum to where it stands today.

Our goal is to create an interesting and unique newsletter that will, hopefully, help graduate students learn and connect via the numerous activities and opportunities provided by the forum. As we expand, we offer and encourage our members to further connect by joining our new Facebook page.

Please feel free to contact me or any member of the FGSA executive committee at any time. Your suggestions, questions, and comments are always welcome!

Best wishes for a creative and exciting academic year ahead.

Thank you and kind regards.

Vikram Singh Prasher
Newsletter Editor and Member-at-Large
APS Forum on Graduate Student Affairs
HI-SPIN Research Lab
University of Massachusetts Lowell
Lowell, MA 01854
Tel: 978-934-4373, Fax: 978-934-3068

Science gets political: The APS Congressional Visit Day 2012



David A. Anderson

Every spring, in conjunction with the yearly American Physical Society (APS) Units Convocation, the APS organizes a one-day grassroots campaign to meet with members of the United States federal government to advocate for science funding. This Congressional Visit Day (CVD) is organized by the APS Washington Office which calls on volunteers from the APS Units Convocation attendees to meet with their respective elected representatives in Congress and express the views and concerns held by the physics community on proposals and legislation impacting the funding of science.

This year 39 APS participants from 20 states took part in CVD, including FGSA chair-elect Laura Boon on the Illinois/Indiana team and myself on the Michigan team. The visits with our respective senators and representatives this year had two primary asks: (1) urge them to support robust budgets for science agencies as requested by Presidents Bush [in his previous budget proposal] and Obama, and (2) urge them to ensure a balance between strategic and discovery-driven research at those agencies and to guarantee that NSF continue its historic role as an agency focused on scientific discovery.

The general consensus among CVD participants was that the visits were positive overall this year, with members of Congress, Republicans and Democrats alike, generally supporting our asks. A standing concern for the 2013 science budget is that of sequestrations, or automatic budget cuts of \$1.2 trillion over nine years that will come into effect in January of 2013 if Congress does not come up with an alternative plan to reduce the federal deficit. The effect of these sequestrations will be across-the-board reductions in the budget, including reductions in science funding. Defense appropriations will be cut by 11% while non-defense appropriations by approximately 8%. As an example, if the 5% increase in funding for the NSF as proposed in the President's budget request to Congress for fiscal year 2013 is adopted (see details at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget>), it will become a 3% reduction

when the sequestrations come into effect. Learn more about the sequestrations and their effect on science funding here: <http://physicsfrontline.aps.org/2011/12/12/budget-control-act-threatens-future-science-funding/>. While increasing federal science budgets has historically received strong bi-partisan support, a resolution to the present issues is currently far from being reached with Republicans and Democrats placing blame on each other instead of working together towards a resolution.

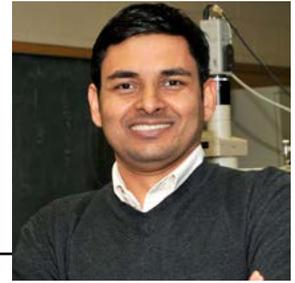
The CVD provides a unique opportunity for physicists – professors, graduate students, physicists in industry, among others – to take an active role in promoting science funding in face-to-face meetings with U.S. senators and representatives and or their staff. It is an equally positive opportunity for members of Congress to have direct discussions with scientists on the relevance of funding science programs. As most members of Congress do not have a background in science and may be somewhat removed from the scientific community in their day-to-day activities, reinforcing their ideas on the critical link between scientific research, technological innovation and their invaluable benefits to the American economy and society is a crucial part of an effective APS Congressional visit. As a first-time participant, I can say the CVD was an eye-opener about what the scientific community can do to open lines of communication with our country's policy-makers. It was also a welcome reminder of the obligation we have as individuals in the scientific community to actively communicate with members of Congress on these important issues.

To keep up to date on what is happening with science in Washington, D.C. visit the APS blog at physicsfrontline.aps.org. You can also follow them on Twitter @APSPhysicsDC.

This article was written in May 2012 by David A. Anderson, a Ph.D. candidate in Applied Physics at the University of Michigan and currently the APS FGSA Treasurer. You can contact Dave at anderda@umich.edu.

CAM Conferences: Breaking the Boundaries

Abhishek Kumar



Group photo during the Banquet dinner. Photo courtesy of Ken Cole, APS

It gives me great pleasure to share with you the success story of Canadian-American-Mexican Graduate Student Physics Conference (CAM). CAM is a bi-annual conference exclusively planned by and for graduate students and sponsored by American Physical Society (APS), Mexican Physical Society (SMF) and Canadian Association of Physicists (CAP). The venue of this conference rotates among the three participating countries. Every year the physics community throughout the world organizes numerous conferences. The obvious question then is, why do we need another conference like CAM? What are the goals and objectives of this conference and how does it cater the needs of future generations of scientists in North America? In this news article I intend to share with you all my personal experience as a participant and an organizer and future perspectives of CAM conference.

History of CAM:

The CAM conferences are a collaborative and cooperative effort of three physical societies in the North American, namely, APS, SMF and CAP, to cater to the needs of graduate student communities. Though the first CAM meeting was held in 1994, the CAM 2003 held in Mexico represented the first graduate student physics conference where students took an active role in organizing and planning. Since then the tradition has been continued and CAM is hosted on a rotation basis by Mexico, the United States and Canada. The most recent CAM was held in Washington D.C. in 2011 and was hosted by APS. CAM provides a unique platform to students

from the participating countries to interact with fellow students beyond geographical borders and boundaries of sub-disciplines. Typically, while in graduate school, students are more focused and dissolved in their sub field of research. The cross-disciplinary interactions provided by CAM facilitate exchange of ideas and helps students with their professional development. Additionally, students take a leading role in organizing this conferences and that experience prepares them well to take up the upcoming professional challenges. The main goals of this conference are to (1) provide a unique opportunity for students from all three countries to break the geographical boundaries and initiate interactions, (2) develop professional skills, (3) gain a broader view of physics beyond their own research, (4) encourage talks between people in different sub fields of physics, and (5) establish future collaborations, and more importantly all of these in a very informal and congenial environment.

A Glimpse of CAM 2011:

CAM 2011 was held in Washington D.C. from September 29th to October 1st at the Liaison Capitol Hill Hotel. CAM 2011 was attended by about 125 participants including students, post docs, invited speakers and guests. As a host of CAM 2011, FGSA APS formed an international organizing committee comprising students from all three countries and staff members from the participating societies as mentors. The actual planning of CAM 2011 was started in July 2010 and I personally feel privileged to have worked with



View of the Banquet Hall. Photo courtesy of Ken Cole, APS

many talented personnel. Along with the scientific focus, two additional themes of CAM 2011 were “Science and Public Policy” and “Science for Diplomacy”, which nicely fit with the location of the conference. All participants greatly appreciated the two panel discussion sessions apart from technical talks by students and invited speakers and a poster session. The panel discussion sessions were very lively and there was ample opportunity for students to ask questions to panelists directly. Panelists also shared their own experiences working on science policy and impact of their scientific training on the task at hand.

FGSA APS sponsored a welcome reception for CAM 2011 participants on Thursday (Sep 29th, 2011) evening at the roof top of the hotel. The welcome reception provided students an opportunity to mingle with each other. The welcome reception was well received, and FGSA executives interacted with participants individually. On Friday (Sep 30th, 2011), the CAM 2011 organizing committee hosted the CAM 2011 Banquet Dinner at Capitol Hill Rayburn House Office, Building Foyer. Dr. Amy Flatten, Director of International Affairs, APS was the Banquet Speaker. She encouraged student participants to think beyond their laboratory research and disciplinary boundaries and emphasized the need for international scientific collaboration and cooperation. She also highlighted the critical aspects and close relationship between science and society in the today’s globalized world.

Overall, CAM 2011 was very successful in meeting the set goals for CAM conference. Participants enjoyed their stay in Washington D.C. and used the opportunity to interact with fellow students and invited speakers.

CAM 2013: Canada Calling:

CAM 2013 will be hosted by CAP from August 15-18th, 2013. The University of Waterloo has been selected by the CAP to host CAM 2013. APS is working to raise funds to support students’ travel partially. More information regarding CAM 2013 will be available soon on the CAP website. We strongly encourage to those who are interested in attending CAM 2013 and presenting their research work to check the website for more details.

I would like to acknowledge on my personal behalf and also on behalf of FGSA, all the help and support received from APS, SMF and CAP Staff Members, CAM 2011 sponsors (National Science Foundation, APS, SMF, CAP, Argonne National Laboratory, and the U.S. Liaison Committee for IUPAP) and all participants. I also owe my sincere gratitude to Ivelisse Cabrera and Kyler Kuehn. I congratulate the CAM 2011 Organizing Committee Members for their dedication and hard work and for making CAM 2011 a blast. Last but not least my sincere thanks are due to Dr. Amy Flatten and Ms. Michele Irwin for their able guidance and mentorship.

CAM 2013 Waterloo

Conférence pour Étudiants Diplômés en Physique
Canadian-American-Mexican
 Graduate Student Physics Conference

AUGUST 15-18 AOÛT

PHYSICS AND ASTRONOMY



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

IQC Institute for
Quantum Computing




Deadlines to follow
Travel support available

Les dates limites suivront
Soutien financier disponible pour
frais de déplacement



cam2013@uwaterloo.ca
www.cap.ca/CAM2013

Poster for CAM 2013, hosted by the University of Waterloo.

FGSA Climate Survey

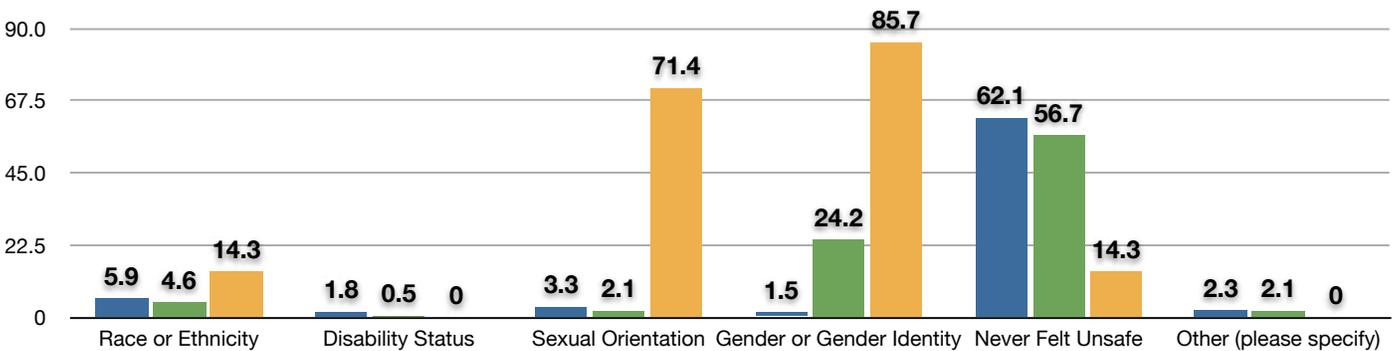
Elena Long



Last year, FGSA hosted a survey to measure the climate of physics departments for graduate students. The survey focused particularly on issues of language heard and harassment experienced by physicists and was broken down into categories based on race, physical and mental ability, gender, and sexuality. Furthermore, it examined the outcomes of experienced harassment and the reasons for when harassment was not reported. Due to the nature of the study, overlapping demographics, especially “multiple minorities,” were also explored. A full report of the survey is in progress and will be shared through FGSA in the coming months.

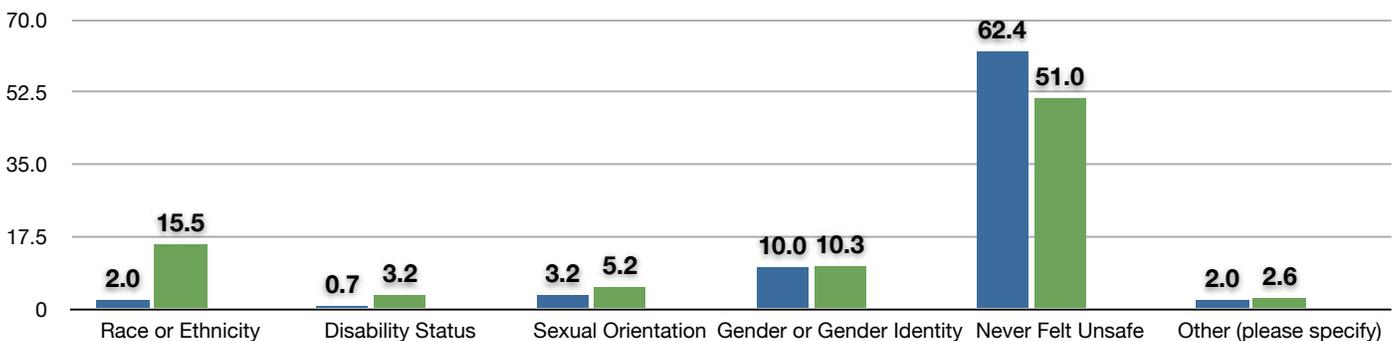
The survey had 596 respondents. These respondents were separated by the following: By gender, there were 65.6% men, 32.6% women, and 1.2% non-binary respondents; by race/ethnicity, there were 26.0% people of color and 74.0% white or caucasian; there were 4.9% respondents with disabilities and 95.1% without; and by sexuality, there were 15.8% LGBT+ and 78.2% straight and cisgender respondents. Although experiences were looked at individually, there is one series of plots which describe the story shown throughout the survey. It is shown below, where respondents chose if they felt unsafe within their institution and what part of their identity they felt unsafe because of. In addition, a blank space was left for respondents to fill in an “Other” category of which the most common response was Religion (5 respondents).

Number of Respondents Who Felt Unsafe Due To:



Where Blue = Men, Green = Women, and Orange = Non-binary

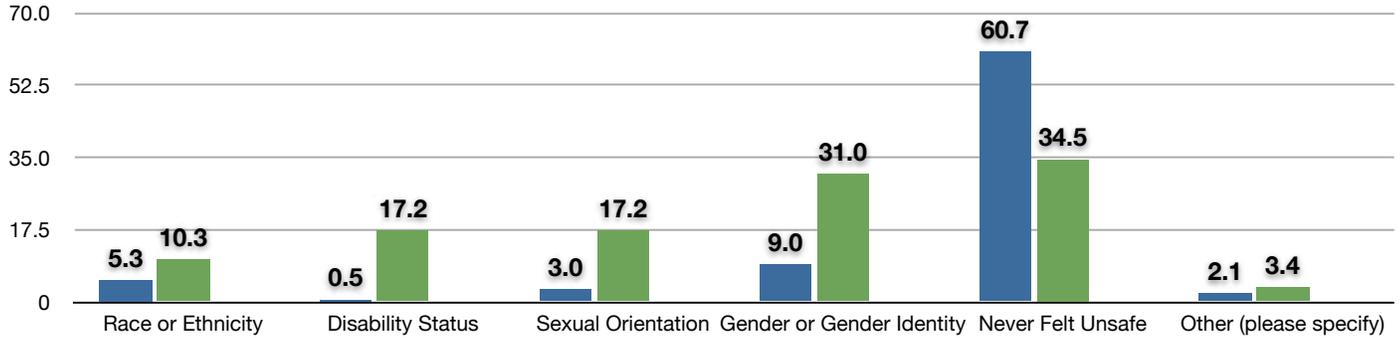
Number of Respondents Who Felt Unsafe Due To:



Where Blue = White or Caucasian, Green = People of Color

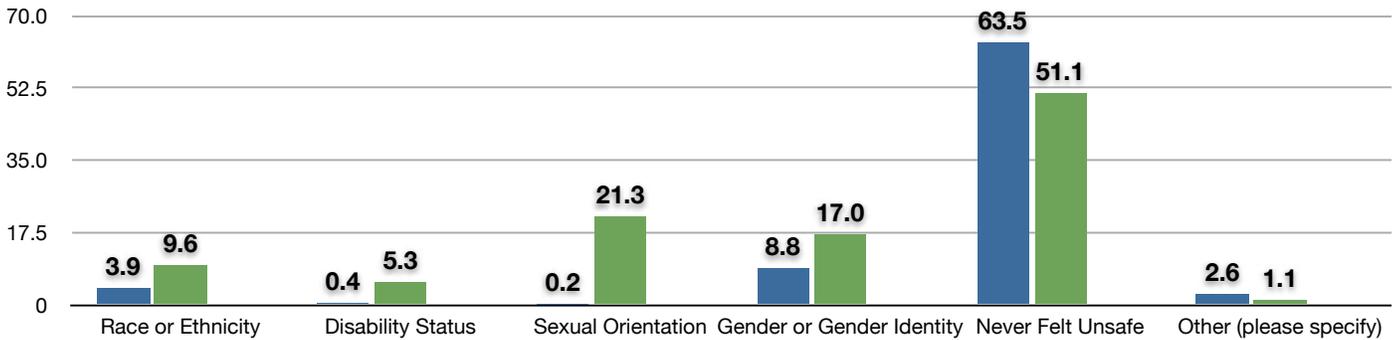
FGSA Climate Survey

Number of Respondents Who Felt Unsafe Due To:



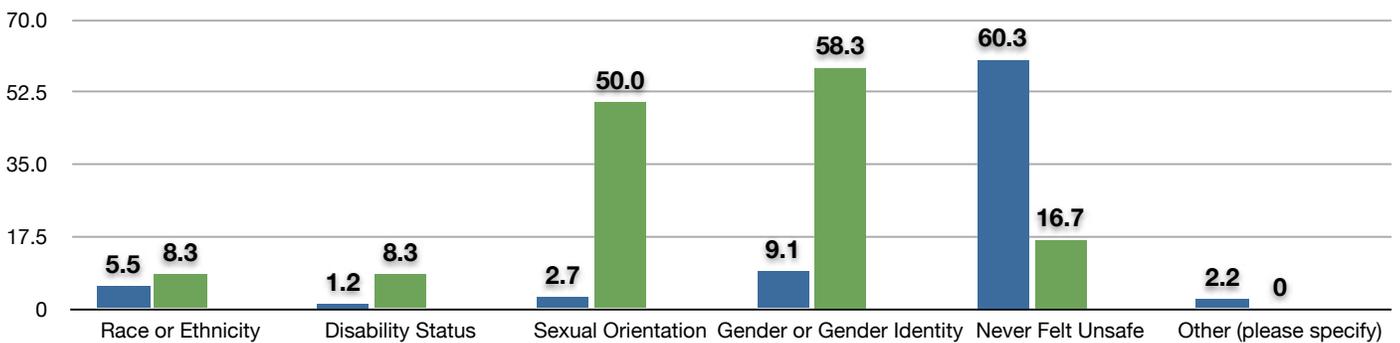
Where Blue = Typically Able, Green = Differently Able

Number of Respondents Who Felt Unsafe Due To:



Where Blue = Straight and Cisgender, Green = LGBT+

Number of Respondents Who Felt Unsafe Due To:



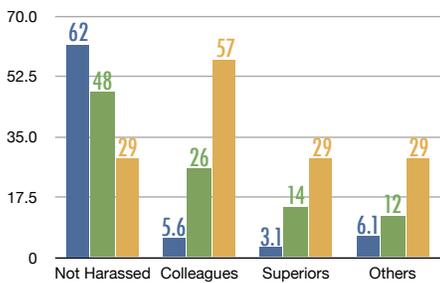
Where Blue = Cisgender, Green = Transgender or Non-binary

FGSA Climate Survey

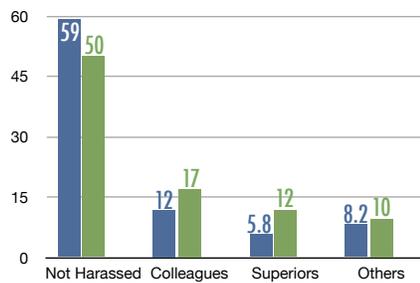
Another important set of plots was who where harassment was coming from. Of those respondents who found themselves harassed, the majority of it came from from their colleagues.

Experienced Verbal/Online Harassment From Colleagues, Superiors, or Others (Numbers are Percentages)

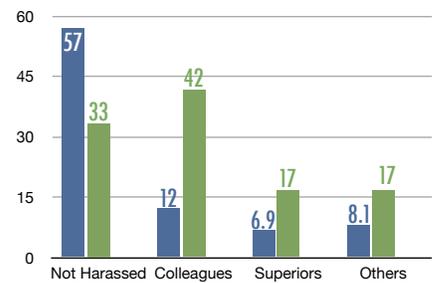
391 Men **194** Women **7** Non-binary



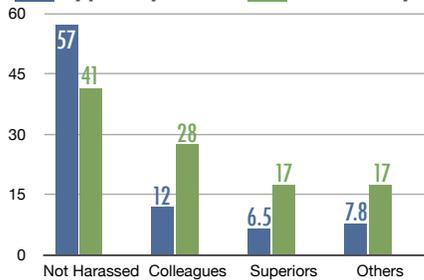
466 Cis & Straight **94** LGBTQQAP



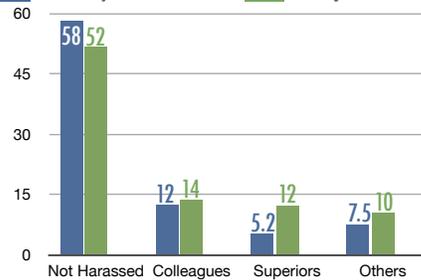
584 Cisgender **12** Trans & Non-binary



567 Typically Able **29** Differently Able



441 White/Caucasian **155** People of Color



At the end of the survey, a space was left for people to let us know if we had missed anything through the survey. A number of women respondents (1.5%) mentioned specifically being sexually harassed at conferences as something that has happened to them but that there was not a question for on the survey. Also of particular note, this is the first study ever done on physicists that included LGBT+ demographics. Because of this, some of the results which focused on this demographic were presented at the APS March Meeting during the Session on Sexual and Gender Diversity Issues in Physics.

Reflections on representing the FGSA on the APS Council



Amber Stuver

I was honored to represent the FGSA as your first representative on the APS Council between 2008-2011 inclusive. This is a milestone in that it recognized that we represent a significant portion of the APS membership and we now have a greater say in the decisions the society makes.

The APS Council is composed of representatives from forums, sections, and divisions along with the presidential line (current, elect, vice, and past), the operating officers (Executive Officer, Treasurer/Publisher, Editor in Chief), and the chairpersons of the Nominating Committee, and the Panel on Public Affairs. Meetings of the Council take place twice a year, usually in April (just before the April Meeting) and in November (with a division meeting). All of the major decision making for the Society is made through the Council, including setting membership dues, approving the annual budget, electing fellows, electing the operating officers, approving new forums and sections, etc. This may sound like a daunting amount of work for a committee who meets for one day, twice a year, but the Council is well advised by committees, the Executive Board (more on this later), and the operating officers. After the Council considers their recommendations, the Council usually (but not always) approves their course of action.

As your Councilor, I was privileged to speak on your behalf many times, usually advocating for representation of graduate student interests in all parts of the Society. This has resulted in a change in our Councilor's term from 2 to 4 years (the term given to every other Council member), more units including graduate students as voting members of their Executive Committees (not just in advisory capacities), and considerations for young physicists in the new Strategic Plan of the Society, among other things. During my term, I also participated in the election of a new Executive Officer (Kate Kirby) for the Society, highly heated discussions on statements of public policy (e.g. the statement on climate change), and the planning and approval process of a large expansion of the Society's Ridge Office in NY (where journal editing takes place).

I was also honored to be elected to the Executive Board (2010-2011, inclusive) which, while it is not the official decision making body, assumes a more active role in Society planning and refining recommendations for the Society. At the last Council Meeting of the year, Councilors who are ending the second year of their term are eligible to be elected to the Executive Board by the Council. This is the primary reason I pushed for the extension of our Councilor's term from two to four years; a two-year term would have excluded us from ever having representation on the Board. The Executive Board meets five times a year, two in conjunction with the Council, two more times usually in February and September, and a retreat in June. The development of the new Strategic Plan for the society is an excellent example of the more active role the Board plays in planning – not only did I have input in the new plan, but I also worked on a subcommittee that focused on “Serving Members and Growing Membership”.

Finally, I would like to note that the entire time that I represented the FGSA, I was a postdoc – not a graduate student. I believe that having gone through the entire gauntlet that is graduate school, I was better able to represent all aspects of the experience – from research experience, dissertation composition, to seeking your first professional position while preparing to defend. I was also a member of the FGSA Executive Committee as a Member-at-Large while I was a graduate student. I believe that it was the combination of my whole experience as a graduate student and my previous professional service to the FGSA that prepared me well to represent you as your Councilor. I would recommend making this experience a precedent for future Councilors (which my successor, Eric Sorte, exemplifies).

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to represent you and I will continue to advocate for graduate student considerations throughout my career.

Message from APS Office of International Affairs



Dr. Amy K. Flatten

I would like to take a moment to share the many activities we in the APS Office of International Affairs (INTAF) have undertaken—as they say “with a little help from our friends,” such as those of you in FGSA. Many of you are well aware of the Canadian-American-Mexican Graduate Student Physics Conference (CAM2011) that was held in Fall 2011, as well as the opportunities for graduate student visits to India & Brazil (see below) for our exchange programs. As you progress in your scientific careers, however, it is often hard to focus on activities beyond your individual laboratory research. I want to use this article to describe the many ways that you, through APS international programs, can engage and partner with your colleagues across the globe. Hopefully, some of these activities will pique your interest in bringing us new ideas or becoming further involved in APS international activities.

Throughout 2011 the Society has been especially focused upon better serving APS members living beyond U.S. borders and upon reaching out to the international physics community. By establishing the International Friends of APS network, key contacts across the world served as the Society’s representatives at their institutions, helping to plan APS activities and communicate with members in their local communities. This past year, the International Friends used Activity Grants from the Society to host local activities in such diverse locations as Cartagena, Colombia; Jerusalem, Israel; Taipei City, Taiwan; Hsinchu City, Taiwan; Bangalore, India; and Warsaw, Poland.

This past year, the APS partnered with other national physics societies toward a number of initiatives. With the Sociedade Brasileira de Física (SBF), we issued our calls for proposals for an exchange program for physics graduate students and professors. Here, the Brazil-U.S. Physics Student Visitation Program offered graduate students a breadth of opportunities in physics, such as attending a short-course or summer institute; visiting with a professor in his/her field of study; working temporarily in a lab; or any other opportunity that the student and professor felt was worthy of travel support. The Brazil-U.S. Professorship/Lectureship Program funded physicists in Brazil and the United States who wished to visit overseas to teach a short course or deliver a lecture series in the other country.

The Society continued to partner with the Indo-U.S. Science and Technology Forum (IUSSTF) toward exchanges of graduate students and professors between the United States and India. Like our program with Brazil, this program funds visits overseas to teach short courses or provide a “physics lecture series” at U.S.

and Indian universities. The student visitation program not only enabled U.S. students to conduct research in India’s laboratories, but provided first-hand experience with Indian science, culture, and fostered opportunities for developing long-term collaboration.

I believe these are wonderful opportunities—and I need to ask the FGSA’s help in advertising BOTH of these exchange programs. We need to encourage U.S.-based students to take advantage of these travel funds and the chance to learn about scientific cultures beyond U.S. borders. There is no requirement of U.S. citizenship, just as long as you are studying at a U.S. institution. So please make your colleagues and advisors aware of these programs.

We also endeavored to serve our colleagues in the developing world. In partnership with the UK Institute of Physics (IoP) and the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP), the Society co-sponsored a workshop in Cebu City, the Philippines, designed for physicists and engineers from developing countries who are interested in learning entrepreneurial skills. Such an educational program is missing in many of the developing countries. The event attracted 63 participants who learned about issues such as intellectual property and business planning.

The SESAME Travel Award Program, the Society’s joint program with the European Physical Society (EPS), the UK Institute of Physics (IoP), and the German Physical Society (DPG), endeavored to build scientific capacity in the Middle East. The SESAME project—the synchrotron light source in Amman, Jordan, brings together physicists from Arab countries & Israel for international scientific collaboration. By enabling Middle Eastern physicists to avail themselves of training opportunities, the APS and other partnering societies have been building a synchrotron “user community” in the region.

Many of you have read about some of the human rights cases of scientists in APS News. For example, an APS member and University of Texas at Austin graduate student, Omid Kokabee, has been jailed in Iran on charges of espionage. You may not realize, however, that APS has a long history of working on behalf of scientific colleagues throughout the world who have faced human rights violations. The Society partnered with other organizations toward the AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition—a network of professional societies providing strengthened connections between the human rights and scientific communities. Through this Coalition, and through the efforts of its volunteers, the APS stressed the need for scientific organizations to advocate for the human rights of scientists in the U.S. and around the world.

Message from APS Office of International Affairs

Here in the United States, you probably all have friends that have had problems with visas to study or work at U.S. institutions. I want to let you know that APS is working to improve visa processing for visiting science students and scholars and has continued its vigilance regarding important U.S. Government policies that impact international scientific collaboration. The APS joined other scientific and higher education organizations to meet with State Department officials regarding new developments in visa processing and will continue to work with federal leaders to ensure national security concerns do not unduly restrict scientific research with international colleagues. In the mean time, please visit our website for more information on avoiding (or handling) difficulties with visa applications: www.aps.org/programs/international/visa.

As I mentioned above, INTAF & FGSA partnered with the physical societies across North America for the Canadian-American-Mexican Physics Graduate Student Conference (CAM2011) that was hosted by the APS in Washington D.C. The CAM conferences are bi-annual meetings jointly sponsored by the APS, the Canadian Association of Physicists (CAP), and the Sociedad Mexicana de Física (SMF). They provide a unique scientific meeting for physics graduate students and are organized by the students themselves, with mentorship from senior staff of the respective professional societies. The conference hosting rotates among the 3 co-sponsoring countries, and hence, the APS hosted CAM in 2011. The conference promoted international networking and career development for physics graduate students, encouraged collaborations among North America's young scientists, and exposed students to sub-disciplines of physics beyond their individual research. Along with the scientific sessions, hosting CAM2011 in Washington, D.C. also provided a unique opportunity to highlight the links among science, diplomacy and public policy. We are looking forward to CAM2013, which will be hosted by CAP at the University of Waterloo on August 15-18, 2013

I want to conclude my "remarks" to my friends at FGSA by underscoring an important point. While these activities mentioned above are managed by INTAF, volunteers (such as yourselves) have been crucial to the success of our efforts! As you grow into leadership positions within the APS, I hope to partner with you toward growing the Society's international programs – By working together, we can expand our service to physicists worldwide. Please don't hesitate to contact me at Flatten@aps.org to learn how to work with INTAF and to bring your important ideas into the activities of APS. Thank you all for your efforts.

Dr. Amy K. Flatten
 Director of International Affairs
 American Physical Society

FGSA Travel Awards



Hassan Masoud

The FGSA Travel Award for Excellence in Graduate Research has been established to recognize graduate students who have made exceptional progress in their research by covering travel expenses up to \$500 to present their work in a scientific conference or workshop. The award is also a part of FGSA mission to increase the participation of graduate students in scientific conferences, meetings, and workshops. Awards are limited to one trip per calendar year per person, and the recipient must be a member of the APS and the FGSA. Award applications are accepted on a quarterly basis. The deadline for each round of application is announced in a separate e-mail sent to all FGSA members. Updated information can also be found at <http://www.aps.org/units/fgsa/activities/travelgrants.cfm>.

Advertisements: Student Visitation Programs

Brazil-U.S. Exchange Program



The Sociedade Brasileira de Física (SBF) and the American Physical Society (APS) are pleased to sponsor an exchange program for physics graduate students and professors in the U.S. and Brazil.

Through the **Brazil-U.S. Physics Student Visitation Program**, graduate students can apply for travel funds to pursue a breadth of opportunities in physics, such as: 1) attending a short-course or summer institute; 2) visiting with a professor in his/her field of study; 3) working temporarily in a lab; or 4) any other opportunity that the student and professor feel is worthy of travel support. Grants are for up to USD \$3,000.

The **Brazil-U.S. Professorship/Lectureship Program** funds physicists in Brazil and the United States wishing to visit overseas to teach a short course or deliver a lecture series in the other country. Grants are for up to USD \$4,000.

Students and professors in the U.S. can learn more about the program on the APS website at:
www.aps.org/programs/international/

Professors and students in Brazil can obtain additional information from SBF at: www.sbfisica.org.br/v1/

India-U.S. Travel Grants



Physicists and physics graduate students in India and the United States can apply for travel grants to pursue opportunities in the other country.

The **APS-IUSSTF Professorship Awards in Physics** funds physicists in India or the United States wishing to visit overseas to teach short courses or provide a physics lecture series delivered at a U.S. or Indian university. Awards are up to U.S. \$4,000.

Through the **APS-IUSSTF Physics Student Visitation Program**, U.S. and Indian graduate students may apply for travel funds of U.S. \$3,000 to pursue opportunities in physics. The travel funds could be used to attend a short-course or summer institute, to work temporarily in a laboratory, or for another opportunity that the student and the host professor believe is worthy of support. The Physics Student Visitation Program aims to mostly support graduate student travel to India by U.S. citizens, while enabling some students of Indian citizenship to travel to the United States.

Further details about both programs, including proposal guidelines, are provided at:
www.aps.org/programs/international/us-india-travel.cfm

This program is sponsored by the Indo-U.S. Science and Technology Forum (IUSSTF) and administered by the American Physical Society (APS).

FORUM ON GRADUATE STUDENT AFFAIRS

AMERICAN PHYSICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER JULY 2012

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Vikram Singh Prasher
Member-at-Large (01/12–12/13)
University of Massachusetts, Lowell

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