

APS Committee on Minorities

2014 Annual Report

Mary James, Chair

The Committee on Minorities (COM) is dedicated to increasing the participation of underrepresented minorities in physics. In 2014, COM undertook four 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 23 first time scholarships and 16 second year renewal scholarships.

In anticipation of creating the National Mentoring Community described below, COM voted to phase out the APS COM minority scholarship program. The 2013 qualitative study of the efficacy of the scholarship program commissioned by COM and APS staff suggested that, while scholarship winners appreciated the recognition and financial support, the scholarship and distance mentoring provided did not play a pivotal role in most student's persistence in the physic major.

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

In 2013 COM designed and implemented a comprehensive survey to solicit the advice of the broader physics community in 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 identifying 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. In 2014 a COM subcommittee analyzed the survey results and presented them to the full committee. Survey results suggested that the National Mentoring Community described below would address several barriers to persistence of URM undergraduate physics majors identified by survey respondents.

3) APS National Mentoring Network

After considering both the community survey results and the 2013 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 worked with the APS staff to design a new

program called the National Mentoring Community (NMC). The NMC seeks to build and support a core of well-trained mentors for undergraduate physics majors at campuses across the nation. The NMC will identify mentors throughout the country who can establish a personal relationship with students and provide them with guidance and support as they navigate their academic careers. Mentees will be identified by mentors. The program will provide support to both mentors and mentees to get the most out of their relationship.

The program will sponsor an annual meeting that brings together students and their mentors to provide professional development activities, share ideas, and build relationships. The NMC project will eventually include a needs-based scholarship fund that mentors can call on to assist physics students in financial need.

The National Mentoring Community program was approved by the APS leadership committees in November, 2014. It is currently enrolling mentors and their mentees and will hold its first national meeting in October of 2015.

4) APS Bridge Program, Partnership Institutions

COM is working with the APS staff to select and evaluate graduate physics departments that would like to become Partner Institutions with the APS Bridge Program. The Bridge Program seeks to match URM and other non-traditional students who have completed a BA or BS in physics with graduate programs in physics. Partner Institutions can admit students with BA or BS degrees directly into their own graduate programs or can accept students who have completed an APS Bridge program. In either case the partner institution commits to provide mentoring and other appropriate support to the students. COM's role is to evaluate and advise departments in providing appropriate support to these students.

5) COM Sub-committees

COM established four subcommittees to oversee its work:

- **Subcommittee on Engaging the members at APS Meetings**
This subcommittee helps define the diversity agenda at APS meetings (March, April, section, and other unit meeting).
- **Subcommittee on Information to the Public**
This subcommittee is concerned with messages to prospective URM students, parents, and teachers. They will work on posters, brochures, and other marketing pieces to engage these groups
- **Subcommittee on Bridge Program Partnership Institutions**
This subcommittee will work with the Bridge Program to vet prospective Partnership Institutions
- **Subcommittee on Mentoring & Scholarship (Established)**
This subcommittee is defining the new National Mentoring Network and scholarship component

Acknowledgements

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