

## Committee on Diversity (COD)

### Conference Call

Monday, February 9, 2009, 10:00 – 11:25 a.m.

### Committee Members

Dr. Peggie J. Hollingsworth, Chair

Dr. Regina S. McClinton

Dr. Debra D. Murray

Dr. Sonia Ortega

Dr. Peter W. Perschbacher

Dr. Ariana E. Sutton-Grier

Dr. James Rogers (absent)

### Guest

Dr. Jerome F. Baker, Executive Director

Ms. McLane asked that the members review the email sent by Ariana this morning with information on content for the website.

1. The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming the members to the call.

### 2. Annual Meeting Workshop

Dr. Hollingsworth reported to the Committee about the Committee on Diversity (COD) 2008 annual meeting workshop, "Water Policies in West Africa" presented by Dr. Jon C. Cooper, George Mason University Department of Environmental Science & Policy. It was obvious that Dr. Cooper enjoys his research. The presentation was topical and informative but she had hoped for a larger turnout. She mentioned that Dr. Patrick Usoro, Technical Fellow at General Motors R&D Center in Warren, Michigan and the 2008 Sigma Xi Walton Chubb Award for Innovation recipient, attended and brought a number of members of his family to the presentation.

The discussion then turned to the 2009 annual meeting workshop. The topic will be energy and it is hoped that someone in the Houston area could be approached to keep the cost down to bring someone to the meeting.

Dr. Hollingsworth mentioned that she spent a significant amount of time last year without success to obtain a speaker for the meeting, so she emphasized the need to start

early to ensure success. She continued by asking thoughts for the topic at the meeting that it should be linked to diversity. She mentioned that the cold weather in Michigan brings to mind the disadvantaged who are unable to obtain heat because of the cost.

Dr. McClinton asked the committee their thoughts about Van Jones, author of the *Green Collar Economy* as a possible speaker at the meeting. <http://www.vanjones.net/> Dr. Murray added that she had reviewed his website and thought he was an excellent candidate for a speaker with an excellent background.

Dr. McClinton mentioned Joseph P. Kennedy, II and his program on citizens energy for affordable energy for disadvantaged citizens on the east coast <http://www.citizensenergy.com/main/Home.html> He certainly has the name recognition and the topic is quite broad, to have a workshop on it.

Dr. Ortega thought a topic on environmental justice in relationship to energy would be a possible topic. A power plant in a low-income neighborhood could be the scenario for a workshop.

Dr. Perschbacher mentioned that the Clinton School of Social Studies and the Heifer Project and Winrock project are located in Little Rock, which is not that far from Houston so it may be possible to have a person from the area speak at the meeting. He will check with the groups to see if someone may be able to come to the annual meeting and get back to the committee.

Albert A. (Al) Gore, former Vice President of the United States, was mentioned as a possible speaker. Dr. Ortega said booking Mr. Gore would take long range planning as he was approached as a speaker for the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS). Dr. Hollingsworth reminded the group that Mr. Gore had received an award from Sigma Xi and he is an honorary member of the Society. She felt it worthwhile to at least look into the matter.

### **3. Other COD Activities**

Visit with faculty at Howard University

Dr. Hollingsworth and Ms. McLane visited with the Howard University chapter at the invitation of Dr. Geraldine W. Twitty. Dr. Twitty wanted assistance in bringing diversity and meaning to the Howard Chapter which has fallen into a slump.

Dr. Hollingsworth is acquainted with Dr. Sidney A. Ribeau, President of Howard University (both were at Bowling State University) and spoke with him over the phone about supporting the chapter. It was productive meeting. The provost and various department heads attended the meeting and were supportive of the chapter as well. One of the graduate students will step in to help Dr. Twitty with the duties. The idea is

to eventually pass the baton to him. The postdoc will remain at Howard University and is very interested in Sigma Xi. The hope is to work on diversifying the membership at Howard University. The current membership is primarily in the biological sciences. Members from the medical school, engineering and dentistry did attend the meeting and agreed to be involved with the chapter.

Drs. Rogers and Ortega have agreed to act as judges for the 2009 Howard University Research Symposium on April 9, 2009.

Dr. Ortega mentioned Mary A. McKenna, Associate Professor Department of Biology (lapsed member of Howard University Sigma Xi Chapter) and George A. Middendorf, III (active member of Howard University Sigma Xi Chapter) as individuals that are involved in diversity and would be an enhancement to the group.

The hope is to eventually set this model up as a way of making the changes necessary to ensure the continuity of the chapter members. A plan needs to be in place to find replacements as the officer assumes office. This is the only way to keep the chapter alive with full leadership. A strategic plan needs to be in place to not only to reactivate but to sustain the chapter.

Drs. Hollingsworth, Murray, Ortega, McClinton and Ms. McLane met at the annual meeting. Part of the discussion centered on Shirley A. Jackson, former Chairman of the U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and now President of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI). Dr. Ortega has met Dr. Jackson and heard her speak. She highly recommends her as a possible speaker on behalf of the Committee.

Ms. McLane mentioned that Dr. Jackson is a life member and member of the RPI chapter. She felt that might be our in favor to speak with her about the possibility of speaking at the annual meeting and also a way to revitalize the local chapter. It was agreed to start with the officers of the chapter as a start to get past the gatekeeper then have a conversation between Drs. Hollingsworth and Jackson.

#### **4. Funding for Committee Projects, Student Travel awards, Bill Wiley Award**

Dr. Hollingsworth will be in contact with Phillip K. Cates, Director of Organizational Advancement to see about funding for students at the annual meeting. He could not participate in the conference call because of illness. She also asked about the update for the Bill Wiley award and Ms. McLane stated that too much time has elapsed that it is no longer viable to pursue.

#### **5. Demographic Information**

The administrative offices have completed the work from the Committees on Qualification and Membership along with the Committee on Diversity to follow up on obtaining demographic information on our members.

This will help the Society to know who the members are and make a difference in pursuing grant opportunities. So far the information collected has been received without any comments from the members.

The new nomination forms are online for use and copies were sent to the committee members. Copies of the pie charts that Dr. Williams generated on demographic statistics were sent to the members of the Committee on Diversity.

## 6. Partnerships

Dr. McClinton mentioned that she and Dr. Williams will work to put a list of possible partners together for the committee to partner with.

Mentioned were Project SEED (<http://www.ncprojectseed.org/>) and the American Association of University Women (AAUW <http://www.aauw.org/>). Dr. Hollingsworth thought it best to work with one or two groups and go through the whole process of establishing a good working relationship before moving forward with more groups. Dr. Murray brought up the question of why we would want to have a partnership with another group. We have to work through this question before we can find the right niche.

Dr. Murray gave a brief review of the Beta Kappa Chi Honor Society. <http://www.betakappachi.org/> This is a small chapter based Society located mainly in the southeast. Ms. McLane has been in contact with several Sigma Xi members who will attend the meeting in April in Norfolk, VA. She will send a chapter blue board and other pertinent brochures to be given out at the meeting. One of their most active groups is at Southern University in Louisiana where we have a small chapter that is hard to sustain. We will review the information passed back to us from the meeting that will be shared with the committee to see where we will go from there.

Dr. Perschbacher mentioned having Dr. Bryant Nelson, President of the National Institute of Standards and Technology Chapter recently speaking to the members of his chapter as a possibility to highlight as a member of the Society on the committee website. He continued that his chapter might look into starting another chapter just for students. Dr. Hollingsworth asked how that would differ from the existing chapter. He felt they were not benefiting because the group met infrequently. He continued that the student chapters could meet to do mentorship and other outreach activities.

Ms. McLane mentioned that the Appalachian State University has a two-part chapter with students doing separate activities from the faculty. There is no reason why you could not have separate programs run by the students but still a part of the chapter.

An attempt was made to have a student chapter at St. Mary's College of California and it failed the first year, simply because the students left after the first year, did not renew their Sigma Xi membership after leaving the College. The students are very mobile are in for a year or two and then move on.

Dr. Hollingsworth added that groups of students in the sciences were meeting at the various schools in New York City (NYC) on varied topics. The idea was to have students across NYC meet each other and exchange sciences with very diverse groups coming together.

Dr. Perschbacher mentioned that there will be a poster competition for students at the spring banquet. Dr. Hollingsworth added that getting the president involved is good visibility and ensures faculty involvement.

### Podcasts

At the annual meeting, Dr. McClinton's constituency had a talk about doing podcasts on round table discussions, highlighting research of the members and several other topics. It would be inexpensive to do and would connect with student members; perhaps on iTunes hosted by the Diversity Committee. This would also re-establish a relationship with Dr. Robert P. Dottin, Professor Department of Biological Sciences and the JustGarciaHill website at Hunter College in New York City. Dr. Hollingsworth forwarded Dr. McClinton's suggestion for the podcast to Dr. Dottin. He **was very receptive of the idea. He suggested also doing webcasts** on YouTube that would be accessible to members and encourage interaction from the public.

Dr. Hollingsworth mentioned that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be prepared by Dr. Dottin and SigmaXi staff so that each group has a clear understanding of the relationship. Dr. Hollingsworth questioned whether or not information can be altered on YouTube. She wanted to make sure the information would be secure and protected. Dr. Dottin is currently traveling but would talk to his group at Hunter and get back to the committee. This would definitely interest the younger members while generating new information

The SEED Program, AAUW and SACNAS should be where we focus to begin with working on programs; saving the others for later would be in our best interest. We would set up a MOU with the organizations as we work though what we hope to achieve. Dr. Ortega mentioned that SACNAS has a mechanism in place for setting up an MOU. There is a need to make sure there is a mutual benefit to both. SACNAS is a large community recently signing with two Hispanic organizations. She felt it worth the try since it has become very diverse in the past few years; commenting that the meetings look more like the United Nations in attendance.

Dr. Ortega asked how many women were now Sigma Xi Members, Ariana offered from statistics s sent last fall the numbers are 27% female members in the Society. This would make the connection with AAUW worthwhile to target the female population as addition to the Sigma Xi membership.

## 7. COD Website

Ariana Sutton-Grier distributed a list of content ideas for the diversity website for everyone to review just before the call. (Addendum 1)

There is a need to highlight the diversity award to ensure a wider range of submissions for the award. Start a feature with a little blurb about the activities stemming from the committee that can be updated several times a year. This will be an opportunity to encourage Society members and other individuals to visit the website.

The most useful way is to be a clearing house for diversity as well as about Sigma Xi. It is important that content is updated on a regular basis. An email address for should be provided for those individuals who wish to send information to us.

Dr. Baker suggested additional exposure for the committee, mentioning his "Conversations with the Executive Director" using WiZiQ software. He could focus on diversity in one of the upcoming conversations. The Conversations are held three different times during the day or days but the COD could use the Sigma Xi LinkedIn and Facebook groups to further the cause of diversity. He mentioned visiting with the staff about a quarterly newsletter, the Intercom, the magazine, Sigma Xi Today and the email blasts. There are limited opportunities for chapters to send out information to other chapters and members. This quarterly newsletter would be accessible from the main page with short stories, pictures and items for the diversity that would not be under the member pages. He would like to increase exposure on YouTube.

Ariana mentioned that she did not have many references for underrepresented groups in science aside from women (for example African-Americans) on the list that she generated. This was because her activities have led her to accumulate a list of references on women in science but she requests help from the other committee members to make the list more representative and diverse

Dr. McClinton, asked about the COD award winners. They should be posted on the website. A link should be to an archive of all past award winners as well as the most current winner and perhaps highlight activities for those chapters that did not receive an award

Dr. Ortega asked Dr. Baker how many people joined on the last conversations with the ED. There are about 25 individuals for each of the calls. He had topics in place for the calls and they varied a little the last three times. She mentioned if there would be a topic on diversity, the questions could be what it is that you want to learn and specific interests about diversity. The focus should be on what it is that the community wants to know that can be obtained through information gathering conversations, i.e. people with disabilities. We would know what kind of issues or topics are of interest to the members.

Dr. Hollingsworth inquired to what extent you can put information on the website. Ms. McLane replied the first three items are not a problem as well as the feature person. Resources could be posted as a list of diversity resources and then changed as needed.

Dr. Hollingsworth asked if Sigma Xi used students to do internships at the center. Ms. McLane replied we have in the past but mainly the students wish to be paid for their time.

Ariana Sutton-Grier felt that the title for the articles and studies would be fine on its own without a description. For the resources, additional information could be added. This should be done by the committee as a whole to keep it diverse and a group effort as well as open it out to the website users for their comments and additions.

#### 8. Nominations - Society Offices - Awards

Dr. Hollingsworth asked the Committee to think about individuals to nominate for Society offices and awards. All this information is available on the website.

Ms. McLane asked the Committee to consider another addition to the committee to send the name to Dr. Hollingsworth or Ms. McLane

#### 9. Other Business

No other business was discussed.

The conference call was adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

"This is a good committee with which to work, thank you so much. Have a good day." Chair