

## Report of the Committee on Diversity for the Year ending June 30, 2001

In FY2001, the Committee on Diversity celebrated the conclusion of its first five years as a standing committee of Sigma Xi. This occasion was marked by a two-day retreat that focused on drafting a new five-year plan for the Committee in support of Sigma Xi's efforts to address issues impacting scientists and engineers from underrepresented groups.

### **I. Meetings of the Committee**

The Diversity Committee met twice during the year, as follows:

- A. Retreat, January 13-14, 2001, Doubletree Hotel, Research Triangle Park, NC
- B. Conference Call, July 11, 2001 [while in FY2002, this replaced a postponed spring call].

**II. Activities and Business of the Committee** During these two meetings, the committee focused primarily on developing a new five-year plan and on implementing various programs, described here.

#### **A. Mentoring Program**

A mentoring program to support young faculty from under-represented groups has been under development for a couple of years. Through a questionnaire process, the program will attempt to provide mentors for individuals wanting career guidance and/or support for challenges specifically relating to their status as a scientist from an under-represented group (minorities, women, individuals with disabilities). Current focus is on developing Web-based guidelines for the program and contacting individuals who have expressed interest in participating. Additionally, assessment tools are being developed and the program materials will be reviewed by legal counsel before the program is initiated.

#### **B. Just Garcia Hill Web Site for Minority Scientists**

Sigma Xi sponsored a proposal to the NIH to support the continued development of the Just Garcia Hill Web site for Minority Scientists. The goal of the proposed program is to broaden the scope and impact of the site, located at [www.justgarciahill.org](http://www.justgarciahill.org) and housed at Hunter College. Other organizations will participate as collaborators. This Web site will also support efforts to build mentoring activities. The proposal is currently under consideration at NIH, but Sigma Xi efforts to support the Web site will continue with or without the external funding.

#### **C. Wiley Award**

The committee is committed to establishing an award in memory of Bill Wiley who passed away before taking office as Sigma Xi president. The committee has set a target of raising an endowment of \$150,000 to support a \$5000 annual award to highlight the work of scientists from under-represented groups and individuals who are working to address diversity issues in science and engineering. Discussions with Pacific Northwest National Labs have introduced the possibility of Wiley's former institution supporting the award once Sigma Xi demonstrates a commitment. While ambitious, the committee set a goal of announcing the award at the 2002 annual meeting.

#### **D. Participation in Conferences**

It has always been a goal of the Diversity Committee to increase Sigma Xi's visibility at conferences that target scientists and engineers from under-represented groups. However, the cost of attending such conferences as an exhibitor is prohibitive. The committee discussed various strategies for maximizing Sigma Xi's impact and presence at these meetings at a minimal cost. To that end, the committee asked staff to develop a packet of materials that target young scientists from under-represented groups and that illustrate the benefits of affiliating with Sigma Xi. These packets will be made available for members of the committee or any members of the Society to distribute at appropriate conferences.

#### **E. Building Connections with Other Organizations**

In discussion about Sigma Xi's role in addressing diversity issues, the committee concluded that Sigma Xi could make a strong impact by becoming a "Coalition Builder" or a "portal" for communication about minority and diversity issues in science and engineering. Because of limited resources, we cannot afford to "reinvent the wheel," but we could be very effective at making and building connections between organizations that are addressing these issues. Through the committee and individual members of the Society, the committee will focus on building such connections.

#### **F. Fall 2001 Annual Meeting**

The committee discussed the importance of always having a presence at the Sigma Xi annual meeting and committed to doing so. They also agreed that is important to have a chapter "take-home" component of any activity since outreach to chapters is one of the primary goals of the Annual Meeting-chapter leaders should leave annual meeting with tools and strategies.

#### **G. Student Programs**

In addition to developing promotional materials about Sigma Xi that target students, particularly those from under-represented groups, the committee on diversity is working to design some ongoing efforts to increase minority student involvement in Sigma Xi activities. In conjunction with the 2001 Annual meeting, the committee will be inviting numerous students to join with senior scientists for a day of exploring career

options in science and engineering.

- **H. 2002 Forum Planning**

The 2002 Sigma Xi forum will address topics relating to diversity in science and engineering. The committee nominated three members to serve as representatives to the forum steering committee and developed a tentative name for the forum: "The Changing Face of Science and Engineering." The committee will support efforts to broaden the scope of the forum to include chapter-based activities and outreach to historically black colleges and universities and minority serving institutions.

- **I. Reflection on the Committee's 1995 5-Year Plan**

In preparation for the discussion about a new 5-year plan, the committee reviewed progress on the 1995 5-Year plan. In reviewing the old goals, the committee agreed that many of them had been achieved:

- Establishing a presence at meetings of other organizations;
- Collecting individual information about gender, ethnic background, etc. of Sigma Xi members;
- Getting the Committee on Diversity designated as a standing committee of board;
- Increasing participation in Society leadership, lectureships, and awards by under-represented groups;
- Continuing the sponsorship of Annual Meeting Workshops and activities;
- Focusing on the retention and success of women and minorities within Sigma Xi.

### **III. Five-Year Action Plan**

Now that the Diversity Committee has established itself as an important presence within Sigma Xi, the committee is challenged with making its actions felt in more substantial way. The fundamental goal of the five-year action plan is to identify fundable approaches to tackling the issues of importance to the Society and this committee. The major elements of the new plan are outlined here.

- **A. Revisiting Issues from the Last 5-Year Plan**

- Collect and disseminate demographic data on Sigma Xi members to underscore the need for diversity activities within Sigma Xi.
- Monitor and work to increase diversity within the Sigma Xi leadership and among award recipients.
- Support professional success for minority scientists.
- Build connections with other organizations to form a strong coalition addressing these issues.

- **B. New Avenues for Activity and Impact**

- Grow and nurture chapters at minority serving institutions.
- Develop chapter-based programs that relate to and support diversity.
- Identify specific sources of external funding to develop and implement these programs.
- Recognize chapters that have exceptional diversity programs, disseminate information about successful programs, support development of programs.
- Use the Committee structure to develop relationships that allow the Diversity Committee to promote agenda throughout Sigma Xi and with other organizations.
- Use the 2002 Forum as an opportunity to promote diversity, develop programs and a network.

### **V. Members of the Committee for FY2000** Susan Kilham, Committee Chair

John Alderete, Univ. of Texas, San Antonio  
Ben Cuker, Hampton University  
Carol Daniels, Florida A&M  
Robert P. Dottin, Hunter College  
Regina McClinton, Univ. of Southwestern Louisiana  
Jeanne Mechler, IBM  
Donna Nelson, Univ. of Oklahoma  
Sonia Ortega, National Science Foundation

#### **Staff Liaisons for FY2000:**

Pam Blondin, Director of Membership and Chapter Programs  
Lisa Rhoades, Manager of Chapter Programs  
Linda Schmalbeck, Manager of Education and Ethics Programs

### **VI. Comments from the Chair**

I would like to thank all of the members of the Diversity Committee and the Sigma Xi staff for their dedicated service. Two members, Sonia Ortega and Jeanne Mechler, completed their terms of service on the committee. Each of them brought insightful and useful input from the perspectives of government and industry, and as members of underrepresented groups in science and engineering. They are richly deserving of thanks from Sigma Xi and from me personally for all of their many contributions.

Respectfully submitted,  
Susan S. Kilham  
Chair