

Report of the Committee on Diversity for the Year ending June 30, 2009

One conference call was held on February 9, 2009 to discuss plans for the upcoming year. During the intervening months, Committee members communicated via e-mail and telephone conversations.

Committee members assumed responsibility to further the goals of the Committee by a) collecting the names of potential speakers for the annual meeting workshop, b) working with the staff at headquarters to provide timely information on diversity topics to be added to the Diversity website, c) investigating the organizations with whom Sigma Xi might form partnerships to work toward common goals on diversity and d) finding sources of funding for the projects.

Workshops: At the 2008 annual meeting, the Committee sponsored a workshop by Jon C. Cooper of George Mason University entitled "Water Quality in Africa". Professor Cooper described the challenging conditions faced by African communities and the impact of changes in the environment on their water supplies. It was agreed that there should be a continuation of a Committee sponsored workshop at each of the annual meetings, preferably linked in 2009 to the "Energy" theme of the meeting, but that the primary focus should remain on issues of diversity.

Visit with Faculty, Students and Administrators at Howard University: A luncheon meeting was held with Howard University faculty and students to offer suggestions and assistance in revitalizing their chapter, discussing ways to broaden the departmental and discipline diversity of membership which is now primarily in the biological sciences. Both the Howard President and Provost have offered to support Sigma Xi activities.

Demographic Survey: Currently demographic information is being collected when dues notices are sent out, at the time of initiations and promotions, and when members contact the Society to change their addresses. This information has become extremely important to understand how Sigma Xi might better serve its members through future programs and projects and, possibly be used as a basis for proposal funding.

Partnerships: Interest continued in developing partnerships with other organizations that have similar diversity goals as the Committee on Diversity through co-sponsorship of programs, workshops, etc. Two members from the Tidewater Chapter represented Sigma Xi at the 66th Annual Joint Conference of Beta Kappa Chi and the National Institute of Science (March 25-28, 2009) hosted by Norfolk University and Hampton University. The purpose of Beta Kappa Chi (BKX), a National Scientific Honor Society, is to encourage the advancement of scientific education through original investigations, the dissemination of scientific knowledge, and the stimulation of high scholarship in the pure and applied sciences. Other organizations that were suggested were the Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS), the Summer Educational Experience for the Disadvantaged (Project SEED) and the American Association of University Women (AAUW). It was decided that it would be better to establish the process for these relationships with one or two organizations before making multiple contacts that could not be sustained.

Podcasts: An exciting new project that has been proposed is to use podcasts, webcasts and YouTube to carry on conversations with members. To use such approaches is timely, as well as inexpensive, and would advance the opportunity to connect with the youth through senior scientists, engineers, mathematicians, and other members of the general society. Robert P. Dottin, Director for the Study of Gene Structure & Function and Professor of Biological Sciences at Hunter College, will again be working with the Committee on Diversity through the JustGarciaHill website, to develop the project and to assist in raising funds to support it.

Websites: An extensive, informative list of topics, separated into specific areas of interest, has had additional references added to it this year. This is an ongoing project to keep the membership updated about issues of diversity.

Acknowledgements

The Chair would again like to express her deep appreciation to a hard-working Committee and their service to the Society. A special note of gratitude is extended to Kathy M. McLane for her guidance and steadfast commitment to the successful achievement of the goals of the Committee.

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