

October 26, 2009

In reply to: Request for mission statement from the CSMA

Dear Dr. Stockman,

In response to your request, the Committee on the Status of Minorities in Astronomy (CSMA) has met to assess our mission and goals. Here is our mission statement as we see it for the upcoming decade. I provide this along with a definition of our vision, charge, goals, and methods to the American Astronomical Society to help develop the strategic plan for the Society.

Vision: Astronomy and Astrophysics will serve as a leader for Physics and other sciences in enhancing underrepresented minority participation, and show significant strides towards parity and equity in all endeavors.

Mission: To improve the participation of underrepresented minorities in Astronomy and Astrophysics at all levels of experience.

Charge: To monitor minority participation in Astronomy, provide recommendations for improvement or opportunities, and foster communication to provide mentor and peer guidance for career development.

Goals:

- (1) To provide a periodic overview of the status of underrepresented minorities in the profession, identifying areas of concern and opportunity. The CSMA will advise the Society, and formulate policies for consideration. The CSMA will maintain a statistical database on PhD production and the employment of minorities in the profession over time.
- (2) To strengthen interactions amongst minorities in the field, and provide connections to specific programs and job opportunities. This includes fostering mentoring and networking, which will connect junior members to more senior members in aid of moving people into programs or jobs.
- (3) To serve as a central contact point to other societies and institutions aligned with our mission, in order to improve minority participation in the sciences. The CSMA will maintain liaisons with similarly-charged societies in Physics, have a presence at national policy forums pertinent to our charge, and foster direct connections with minority-serving higher education institutions.

Methods:

The CSMA will meet regularly, electronically or in person, to review progress towards its goals and develop new policy recommendations or activities. Through connections with similarly charged Physics societies and the Society's other service committees, the CSMA will remain aware of other efforts relevant to its mission. It will utilize existing findings and partner with developing efforts whenever possible.

Dissemination will be through the CSMA website (as a part of the Society's website), which will make available to the community at large information relevant to the committee's mission. The website will be constructed to facilitate communication between those offering assistance, advice, education, or employment, and those seeking it. The CSMA will also maintain an electronic mailing list as a resource for direct networking and mentorship within the community of minority astronomers.

The CSMA will publish a periodic newsletter, thereby informing the Society at large of news in minority education and employment, upcoming events, and other issues of relevance to minorities in the Society.

The Committee will hold yearly sessions at the AAS meetings to foster networking and mentoring connections, and further inform the Society at large.

The CSMA will develop collaborations with institutions (universities, public and private observatories, and laboratories) to directly mentor minority students, and sponsor minority networking or informational events. The CSMA will partner with efforts to foster astronomy development in principally minority serving institutions of higher education, thereby broadening interest in the field beyond its current contours.

The AAS will provide the CSMA with the resources needed implement these methods and achieve its goals.

Regards,

Lou Strolger
Chair, Committee of the Status of Minorities in Astronomy

Other Committee Members:
Andrew Baker

Laura Lopez
Felipe Menanteau
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