

AAS Actions on the State of the Profession

19 Sept 2022

New Expert Personnel

DEI Specialist Dr. Mildred Peyton and Education Specialist Dr. Tom Rice joined the AAS staff in summer of 2022.

TEAM-UP Together

TEAM-UP Together is a collective impact initiative led by the [American Institute of Physics](#), [American Association of Physics Teachers](#), [American Astronomical Society](#), [American Physical Society](#), and [Society of Physics Students](#) to support the scientific community to take the next bold step in doubling the number of African American students earning physics and astronomy bachelor's degrees annually by 2030. The program is funded by a \$12.5 million grant from the Simons Foundation and Simons Foundation International. To learn more, check out teamuptogether.org.

TEAM-UP Together proudly announces the launch of a [game-changing multimillion-dollar scholarship program](#) focused on rolling back underrepresentation of African American students in physics and astronomy over the next five years.

AAAS SEA Change

In 2017, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) created the Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine (STEMM) Equity Achievement (SEA) Change Project. This project seeks to support postsecondary institutions in creating systemic, structural change regarding equity, diversity, and inclusion.

AAAS also worked with STEMM professional societies to develop SEA Change Departmental awards. These awards are like institutional awards but are focused on the discipline/department. Many important decisions are made at the departmental level, which is often noted as the locus for change.

The Physics and Astronomy Disciplinary Committee is comprised of representatives and staff from the American Institute of Physics (AIP), American Association of Physics Teachers (AAPT), **American Astronomical Society (AAS)**, American Physical Society (APS), AVS (Science and Technology of Materials, Interfaces, and Processing), National Society of Black Physicists (NSBP), National Society of Hispanic Physicists (NSHP), the Physics and Astronomy Division of the Council on Undergraduate Research, and OSA (The Optical Society). Since its inception, the Physics and Astronomy Disciplinary Committee has:

- Worked on the Departmental Assessment, which informed the AAAS Departmental Assessment
- Created a framework for piloting the first SEA Change Departmental Awards

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The group is currently implementing the pilot project. The goals of the pilot include testing the departmental assessment and award structures, refining the process, and gauging overall sustainability and interest from the broad physics and astronomy community.

[Charter of the SEA Change Physics / Astronomy Committee](#)

The Inclusive Graduate Education Network (IGEN)

The NSF INCLUDES Alliance: [Inclusive Graduate Education Network \(IGEN\)](#) is a partnership of over 30 societies, institutions, organizations, corporations, and national laboratories poised to lead a paradigm shift in increasing the participation of Black, Latinx and Indigenous students who enter graduate or doctorate level programs in the physical sciences. Its mission is to raise doctoral degree attainment rates of these groups in the physical sciences to match their bachelors degree attainment rates. They will eliminate this disparity by both reducing barriers to access and improving the quality of minoritized students' mentoring and experiences.

The **American Astronomical Society (AAS)**, one of the founding partners of IGEN, is working to bring equity and to increase inclusion in graduate education and in post-graduate research opportunities in astronomical sciences.

CEO Pledge on Diversity

The executive leadership of the [American Institute of Physics and seven of its Member Societies](#) have joined more than 1,500 other leaders in signing the CEO Action for Diversity and Inclusion pledge, recommitting their organizations to advance diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

The pledge, currently signed by CEOs across 85 industries, was created by [CEO Action for Racial Equality](#), a fellowship to advance racial equity through public policy. This diversity and inclusion initiative launched June 12, 2017, and is "committed to advancing inclusion of all employees and making them feel supported in the workplace, regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, age, religion, disability status, veteran status, or other aspect of diversity," [according to the CEO Action webpage](#).

The CEOs and leaders from AIP and AIP Member Societies who signed the pledge are:

- Susan Fox, [Acoustical Society of America](#)
- Angela Keyser, [American Association of Physicists in Medicine](#)
- Beth Cunningham, [American Association of Physics Teachers](#)
- **Kevin Marvel**, [American Astronomical Society](#)
- Kristin Stevens, [American Crystallographic Association](#)
- Michael Moloney, [American Institute of Physics](#)
- Jonathan Bagger, [American Physical Society](#)
- Liz Rogan, [The Optical Society](#)

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Shapley Visiting Lectureships

The [Harlow Shapley Visiting Lectureship Program](#) of the American Astronomical Society is a program of two day visits by professional astronomers who bring the excitement of modern astronomy and astrophysics to colleges of all types. Participation is open to two-year colleges and four-year undergraduate institutions throughout North America including Canada and Mexico, and, especially institutions that do not offer an astronomical degree.

Co-Founding of the Society of Indigenous Physicists

The [Society of Indigenous Physicists \(SIP\)](#) is an emerging network of Indigenous people trained in the discipline of physics, including astronomy and planetary science. We are committed to building community among Indigenous physicists, supporting each other as we navigate academia, industry, non-profit, and consulting spheres. The SIP provides space where we can bridge our identities as Indigenous people and as physicists. This connection serves as a foundation for integrating our scientific contributions with our work to serve our communities through activities such as innovative Indigenous education programs, language-based initiatives, and policy change.

AAS Astronomy Ambassadors Program

For early-career AAS members interested in, or already, doing outreach with students and the public, the AAS Astronomy Ambassadors program provides professional development and mentoring opportunities, through workshops at AAS meetings, an online community of practice, and access to resources and contacts.

Working in partnership with the Astronomical Society of the Pacific (ASP), National Radio Astronomy Observatory, and the Portal to the Public/Institute for Learning Innovation, the [AAS Astronomy Ambassadors program](#) targets early-career astronomers, including graduate students, postdocs, relatively new faculty, and advanced undergrads.

AAS and Astrobites Formalize Partnership

Astrobites strives to make the astrophysical literature more accessible to readers with diverse backgrounds and levels of experience and seeks to lower the barrier for undergraduates transitioning to careers in research. The collaborative's record of achievement is extraordinary: Astrobites has published more than 1,500 summaries of research papers and other original content read daily by thousands within the astronomical community and beyond. Nathan Sanders and his colleagues have sustained and grown their all-volunteer organization since they launched the effort in 2010 and have maintained consistently high editorial standards. The AAS plans to further the two organizations' shared mission by providing hosting for the Astrobites website, increasing the project's visibility within the astronomical

community, and ensuring the team’s editorial independence as a standalone graduate-student organization supported by the AAS.

“I’m thrilled about our [new partnership with Astrobites](#),” says AAS Executive Officer Kevin Marvel. “The content they produce has great value to readers spanning the range from college students to senior scientists, and their community-focused efforts resonate with the AAS leadership. Making the Society’s resources available to this all-volunteer effort will help ensure its sustainability while ensuring that Astrobites retains its unique brand and independence.

“How wonderful it would be if every scientific discipline could boast a ‘bites’ site like we enjoy in astronomy,” continues Marvel. In fact, Astrobites and its founder, Sanders, have spurred over 20 [Sciencebites sites](#).

Standing AAS Programs

FAMOUS Travel Grants

The American Astronomical Society is offering opportunities for AAS members to secure funding to travel to a Society meeting in order to increase the number of astronomers from historically underrepresented groups.

The initiative is called the [FAMOUS \(Funds for Astronomical Meetings: Outreach to Underrepresented Scientists\) Travel Grants Program](#). FAMOUS grants are awarded at a level of up to \$1,000 to attend a single AAS meeting, at which the awardee will present their research. Priority will be given to members of historically underrepresented groups, such as scientists at small colleges, minorities, non-traditional students, and veterans, among others.

Beth Brown Memorial Award

The AAS supports an [award program in memory of Dr. Brown](#) connected with the **National Society of Black Physicists (NSBP) meeting**. The Astronomy and Astrophysics Section of the NSBP selects an undergraduate and a graduate student who present research results in the form of posters and one student, either graduate or undergraduate, for their oral presentation at the NSBP meeting as winners of the award (3 in total). The AAS provides them with complimentary registration at a future AAS meeting (next two meetings only) or an AAS Division meeting to present the same or additional research results and free membership as a student member or affiliate for one year. The Board of Trustees recently approved some enhancements to this program; specifically to cover the cost of travel, lodging and food on a reimbursement basis up to \$1000 maximum to an AAS or AAS Division meeting for each of the three winners in addition to giving them free registration.

The AAS is proud to memorialize Dr. Brown’s contributions to the astronomical sciences and the achievements of these students every year.

Presidential Statements and Board of Trustee Resolutions

- [Statement](#) on Dobbs v. Jackson SCOTUS Case concerning access to reproductive health care

- [Letter](#) from the President to NASA administrator re: James Webb and the Lavendar Scare
- [Statement](#) on Trump Administration Visa Suspensions
- [AAS endorses #strikeforblacklives](#)
- [AAS Divisions condemn institutional racism](#)
- [President calls for members to support Black Americans](#) in the wake of George Floyd's murder

Resolutions Related to Astronomy as a Profession

- [AAS Statement on Undergraduate Research Experiences](#)
- [AAS Statement on Code of Ethics](#)
- [AAS Statement on Limiting the Use of GRE Scores in Graduate Admissions in the Astronomical Sciences](#)
- [Statement on Sexual Harassment by Faculty](#)
- [Statement on "Shirtgate"/"Shirtstorm"](#)
- [On the Postdoctoral Application and Selection Process](#)
- [On Women, Under-Represented Groups and the Baltimore Charter](#)

Committee Actions

- [CSMA micro-grants program](#) aims to reduce the effects of financial scarcity on students who are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color.
- Committee on Employment conducts [survey on equitable hiring practices](#)
- SGMA holds [panel](#) on being "out" in astronomy
- Taskforce on DEI in Graduate Education issues [report](#)
- [People of Color List](#) in Astronomy, voluntary list to increase visibility and provide a resource for colloquium invitations, prize nominations, etc.

Miscellaneous

- [Ability to change pronouns in membership directory](#)
- [Ability to change name in AAS journals](#)
- Annie Jump Cannon Award?
- AIP issues [report on harassment in astronomy](#)