

# **Annual Report on the Committee on the Status of Women in Astronomy for 2011-2012**

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The members of the 2011-12 Committee on the Status of Women in Astronomy (CSWA) are: Joan Schmelz (Chair, Univ. of Memphis), Hannah Jang-Condell (Univ. of Wyoming), Caroline Simpson (Florida International Univ.), Michele Montgomery (Univ. Central Florida), Ann Hornschemeier (NASA GSFC), Donald Kniffen (USRA), Marc Postman (STScI), Laura Trouille (Northwestern), Nancy Morrison (Univ. of Toledo), Ed Bertschinger (MIT), and David Charbonneau (CfA). George Jacoby (NOAO) rotated off the committee, David Charbonneau joined the committee, and Michele Montgomery is currently serving a second term.

## **Activities at the 218<sup>th</sup> AAS Meeting in Boston, MA**

The CSWA and the AAS Committee on the Status of Minorities co-hosted a Special Session panel discussion at the Boston AAS meeting in May 2011 entitled, "Transforming Cultural Norms: Mentoring/Networking Groups for Women and Minorities." The panel discussed how to organize, fund, and ensure sustainability and institutionalization of mentoring programs. Among the topics highlighted were the importance of connecting your goals to your institution's priorities and examples of institutions where mentoring activities are important aspects of tenure and promotion. The session was chaired by Laura Trouille and the panelists were Jim Ulvestad (director of the Division of Astronomical Sciences at NSF, former CSWA member, leader of the astro2010 demographics study group), Ed Bertschinger (chair of the MIT Physics department and deeply involved in a number of mentoring, networking, and cultural change initiatives), Kim Coble (astrophysics faculty at Chicago State University, a minority serving institution, and deeply involved in mentoring and pipeline issues), Marcel Agueros (astronomy faculty and associate director of Columbia University's bridge-to-PhD program for minority students), and Meredith Danowski (astronomy PhD student and co-founder of Boston University's women in STEM mentoring and networking program). The session is described in detail in an article by L. Trouille in the January 2012 AAS Newsletter. Slides from the session are available on the CSWA website:

<http://www.aas.org/cswa/MEETINGS.html>

## **Activities at the 219<sup>th</sup> AAS Meeting in Austin, TX**

CSWA, the Committee on the Status of Minorities in Astronomy (CSMA), and the newly formed Working Group on LGBTIQ Equality (WGLE) sponsored a Special Session entitled, "Increasing Diversity in Your Department," at the 219th AAS Meeting in Austin in January. The session was organized by Hannah Jang-Condell and chaired by Caroline Simpson, both of CSWA. Caroline Simpson opened the session with a talk on addressing unconscious bias in hiring, pointing out that increased diversity in the workforce leads to increased excellence, so it's an important issue for everyone. Andrew West's talk focused on recruitment of under-represented minorities, and

provided data and tools on the topic. He said that although there is no ‘magic bullet,’ there are a variety of things we can do, such as directly asking people to apply for jobs, and to remember to look in unusual places for promising candidates. Van Dixon, from WGLE, addressed recruitment and retention of LGBTIQ astronomers. His main points about making the workplace more welcoming included explicit commitment to inclusion in policies and advertising those policies. Katy Pilachowski talked about creating a family-friendly department, reminding us that it is one thing to have a policy and another to create a culture that is supportive of work-life balance. Her tips included making families visible by, for example, including them in departmental events, and having a departmental bulletin board for recognizing family milestones. The session had approximately 60 people in attendance, many of whom were early-career. It would have been nice to see more senior people, particularly department chairs and division heads, since they are the ones who are in the best positions to make changes. We cannot effect change without their help, and education is the best venue to enlist help. Slides from the talks are available on the CSWA website:

<http://www.aas.org/cswa/MEETINGS.html>

## **Communication with the Community**

Katy Garmany (NOAO) continued as editor of STATUS. Joan Schmelz (University of Memphis) assumed the duties of acquisitions editor. Associate editors were: Pat Knezek (WIYN Observatory), Joannah Hinz (Univ. of Arizona), and Nancy Morrison (U. Toledo). Meg Urry (Yale Univ.) served as Contributing Editor. All-electronic publication began with the issue of June 2011. The winter 2012 issue included: “What Balance? ...”, Blake Bullock's report on the Special Work/Life Balance Panel at the January, 2011 AAS meeting; an assessment of "Science Cheerleaders" by Lynn Cominsky; Meg Urry's report on The Fourth International Conference on Women in Physics, with a remembrance of Yale undergrad student Michele Dufault; a report on unconscious bias by Caroline Simpson; and a review by Joannah Hinz of the book, *America's Women: Four Hundred Years of Dolls, Drudges, Helpmates, and Heroines*. Articles planned for the June 2012 issue include: a report by Nancy Morrison on a workshop on self-promotion techniques; a perspective on hearing what is said by Gerrit Verschuur; and a reprint on gender differences in the brain from AWIS Magazine. Old issues of STATUS are available here:

<http://www.aas.org/cswa/STATUS.html>

In February 2012, Webmaster Nancy Morrison set up an account for the committee with Twitter, to broaden our reach to the community: user name AAS CSWA, @AAS\_Women. [https://twitter.com/#!/AAS\\_Women](https://twitter.com/#!/AAS_Women). She has maintained an average of about one tweet or retweet per day, mostly retweets of items of interest. By May 1, the account was following 35 other users, mainly science-related organizations, publications, and bloggers, and had 85 followers. The sources being followed yield about two hundred tweets per day and have turned out to be a great source of information for our Resources pages.

The CSWA publishes a weekly email newsletter called **AASWOMEN**. There are three co-editors, Joan Schmelz, Caroline Simpson, and Michele Montgomery, who take weekly turns compiling items into the newsletter and mailing it out to the subscribers. For the 2011-12 year,

the newsletter was sent to over 1000 subscribers. A typical issue contains requests for information or advice, links to news items about women in science, announcements of honors and awards given to women in science, information about programs and meetings, and internship and job postings. Some of the topics covered over the past year included advice for improving faculty searches, maternity leave for graduate students, and overcoming the imposter syndrome. Past issues of AASWOMEN are available here:

<http://www.aas.org/cswa/AASWOMEN.html>

The Women in Astronomy Blog has maintained a rotation of regular bloggers: Ed Bertschinger, Ann Hornschemeier, Hannah Jang-Condell, and Laura Trouille, with additional contributions by Michele Montgomery and Joan Schmelz. In March 2012, we invited AASWOMEN readers to write guest entries for the blog, and we now have a parallel series of guest bloggers contributing content to the blog on a weekly basis. Joan Schmelz and Laura Trouille have taken the lead on organizing the guest blogging effort. The goal of the Blog remains to reach out to a younger and broader audience, and to this end the Blog entries are reposted to the CSWA Facebook page where they attract more comments. The Blog now also includes links to share entries on Twitter and Google Buzz. The AASWOMEN weekly newsletter is also reposted to the blog, and blog entries are regularly reposted to AASWOMEN. Topics discussed this past year include breastfeeding while traveling, work-life balance, child care concerns of both men and women, imposter syndrome, peer mentoring, family leave policies for graduate students, and more. The Women in Astronomy blog is here:

<http://womeninastronomy.blogspot.com/>

The Facebook page is here:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Committee-on-the-Status-of-Women-in-Astronomy/43977374494>

## **CSWA Web Site**

The "Resources" pages continued to expand, with new links continually being added. New items are now highlighted in blue for about two weeks so that visitors to the site can easily see changes. Added was a new resource page on the benefits of diversity to organizations. Of the pages originally envisioned, only the one on re-entering the workforce after a career break is still to be posted. In addition, updates to the statistics of invited speakers at conferences continued.

Webmaster Morrison participated in a project run by Marc Kuchner of Marketing for Scientists, in which members volunteered to critique each others' web pages. The critique she received led to small but significant improvements in the site.

CSWA chair, Joan Schmelz, began compiling a list of the percentage of women among the tenured faculty members of Ph.D. astronomy departments in the US. This list has now been expanded to include the percentage of women researchers/faculty/staff with tenure or the equivalent for US astronomy institutes/universities/observatories. Numbers and percentages were confirmed by a member of each organization. The table (see link below) shows that the range is

wide, with Indiana University leading the pack with 50% women on the tenured faculty, but with some other institutions still in the single digits. The average is 14.7%, with a standard deviation of 10.6%. For comparison, 18% of full members of the AAS are women. In addition, 30% of named postdocs have been women for the past 20 years; they represent some of the most highly qualified potential candidates for tenure-track positions. These data are in the public domain and were compiled by the demographics panel for Astro 2010.

Other surveys of women in astronomy have been more general. See, for example, the article in the June 2004 issue of STATUS entitled, "Portrait of a Decade: Results from the 2003 CSWA Survey of Women in Astronomy" by Jennifer Hoffman and Meg Urry. This survey was narrowly focused to begin to answer a very specific question, "Are women succeeding in astronomy?" This list is meant to be an evolving document, so as members of your organization get tenure, retire, arrive, leave, etc., we invite you to send the new numbers to CSWA so we can keep an accurate tally. Please feel free to contact us with any changes, updates, and questions. Also, if you would like to add your department or research organization to the list, please send us the necessary figures.

[http://www.aas.org/cswa/percent\\_tenured](http://www.aas.org/cswa/percent_tenured)

A new section on the history of the CSWA was added to our web page on September 2011. The information was compiled by current CSWA chair, Joan Schmelz, with the assistance of several current and former members. It includes information that led to the establishment of CSWA. There are also lists of past and present committee members, Committee chairs, editors of our newsletters, STATUS and AASWOMEN, and web managers. Development of this page continues. Please see:

<http://www.aas.org/cswa/history>

## **CSWA Recommendations to the NSF Career-Life Initiative**

The NSF recently launched its 'Career-Life Initiative'. This is a long-term plan to develop a set of forward-looking policies and practices to balance career and family life demands in the U.S. science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) enterprise. Establishing such a culture is paramount to recruiting and retaining a high-quality STEM workforce at our nation's academic institutions. In response to NSF's request for input from the community, the CSWA, with Laura Trouille as lead author, provided a document highlighting a set of key issues and practical policy changes addressing them. These included establishing paid family leave policies for graduate students and postdocs, use of grant funds for childcare, provisions in NSF grants for 4-5 year postdoc positions, double-blind review of NSF proposals, elimination of age-bias in fellowships, grants, and awards, and publication of gender submission and recipient percentages for NSF grants. We also provided a version of the document for the NSF AST portfolio review. The full document is posted at:

<http://womeninastronomy.blogspot.com/2012/01/cswa-response-to-nsf-career-life.html>

## **Parental Leave and Childcare for Graduate Students**

CSWA initiated a national survey to determine current policies regarding parental leave and childcare for graduate student parents. Dave Charbonneau sent a letter to the Chair of every department of astronomy and/or astrophysics that offers the PhD degree; there are 28 such departments. In order to keep the survey manageable, we did not extend it to include departments of physics (or joint departments of physics and astronomy). The letter inquired both about leave following the birth or adoption of a child (including questions about eligibility, whether the leave was paid or unpaid, and whether benefits including health care and housing were retained during leave), as well as childcare (including questions about eligibility, access, and financial assistance). The letter sought to determine the official departmental policies, but also inquired about any unofficial policies. The letter also inquired as to mechanisms to cover costs associated with both parental leave and childcare, and the means by which graduate students were informed about the policies. The response rate was 100%, and we thank our colleagues for their time in composing their replies. We are currently compiling the data and will produce a written report, which we will distribute to the departments and circulate via AASWOMEN and the CSWA website. We will present the findings at the January 2013 meeting of the AAS.

As part of this effort, Laura Trouille, Emily Freeland, Aaron Geller, and Nick Murphy presented an online petition publicizing community support for the establishment of family leave policies by Astronomy departments and Fellowship committees. As of May 1, 2012, over 1,110 astronomers have signed the petition. See:

<http://faculty.wcas.northwestern.edu/aaron-geller/petition/index.php>

We also developed a wiki resource for prospective astronomy graduate students, postdocs, and job seekers to compare parental leave policies for graduate students and postdocs at different institutions. See:

<http://www.astrobetter.com/wiki/tiki-index.php?page=Leave+Policies>