

# **Annual Report on the Committee on the Status of Women in Astronomy for 2007-2008**

By Geoffrey Clayton

(CSWA Chair, Louisiana State University, [gclayton@fenway.phys.lsu.edu](mailto:gclayton@fenway.phys.lsu.edu))

The 2008-2009 year was an active one for the Committee on the Status of Women in Astronomy (CSWA). This was my second year as Chair of the CSWA. I will rotate off the committee in June. The CSWA underwent the normal membership rotation with Pat Knezek (NOAO) and James Rhoads (ASU) completing their time on the CSWA. Their efforts on behalf of the committee were much appreciated. The CSWA has one new committee member, Michele Montgomery (UCF).

The CSWA convened a panel at the January 2009 Long Beach AAS meeting which was a mix of senior and junior astronomers. The panel members were Katy Pilachowski (Indiana), Virginia Trimble (UC-Irvine), Meg Urry (Yale), Jennifer Hoffman (DU), Jane Rigby (Carnegie), and Ginny McSwain (Lehigh). The panel had an interesting discussion including whether there is still a role for the CSWA today. On the face of it, barriers have largely been swept aside. Women can attend graduate school. Women are allowed into observatories. Women can receive tenure at Ivy League universities. There was a time when this wasn't the case. Still more promising, the percentage of women in astronomy at the undergraduate level and entering graduate school is approaching parity. However, there was a general consensus that the fight is not yet over. Women still get discriminated against in more subtle ways.

Also, there are still few women at the top level, and until equity is reached at all levels, there is still room for change.

Last year, the committee drafted a letter for the AAS President that was sent in March 2008 to the heads of departments and/or institutions that employ professional astronomers encouraging them to endorse the Pasadena Recommendations. So far, the following departments have endorsed the recommendations:

Associated Universities, Inc.

Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy

The Observatories of the Carnegie Institution of Washington

Columbia University, Department of Astronomy

Gemini Observatory

Louisiana State University, Department of Physics and Astronomy

National Optical Astronomy Observatory

National Solar Observatory

Ohio University, Department of Physics and Astronomy

Smith College, Department of Astronomy

Space Telescope Science Institute

University of Arizona, Department of Astronomy and Steward Observatory

University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Department of Astronomy

University of Texas, Austin, Department of Astronomy

Wellesley College, Astronomy Department

We proposed for a second year to the Elsevier Grant Program for funding for childcare at AAS meetings. James Rhoads took the lead once again in writing a proposal requesting \$20,000 per annum for three years.

Unfortunately, our proposal was rejected again. We have been in contact with the CSWP which wrote a similar successful proposal.

Data collection was recently completed for the first phase of the AAS/AIP longitudinal survey of astronomy graduate students. The project, which began in early 2007, was the result of recommendations made at the 2003 Women in Astronomy Conference. Eventually, the study will track astronomy graduate students over the course of several years. The study has several purposes: to collect data on people who obtain graduate degrees in astronomy, to compare attrition rates for men and women, to collect data on people who leave the field of astronomy, and to collect data on astronomers who work outside the traditional employment sectors of academe and the observatories. During the first wave of data collection, we received more than 1100 responses that are useable for the analyses. Approximately 700 men and more than 400 women responded, representing 148 different graduate programs. Our preliminary analyses show that women and men who have been in the program more than three years are: less likely to agree that the environment in the department is welcoming, more likely to believe they lack ability, and are less confident in their careers. Final results will be available in the fall.

Goddard Space Flight Center, together with the University of Maryland, are hosting a meeting on October 21 through 23, 2009, at the University of Maryland Conference Center on the topic of women in astronomy and space science with a focus on not only gender but generation and minorities. This meeting follows up on the "Women in Astronomy" meeting hosted by Space Telescope Science Institute in 1992 and the Pasadena meeting hosted

by Caltech in 2002. The topics include; 1) statistics on the state of the field, establishing trends over the last 15 years including the “longitudinal studies” of age vs makeup of the field and identifying areas for celebration or for concern; 2) research on the impact of gender/generational/cultural differences in the science workforce, and 3) issues concerning the work environment and best practices for success of scientists in a diverse work force and 4) a special session on issues of minorities in science, and women in Earth Science. There is evidence for considerable success in increasing the percentage of women in the field of science and so we aim here to focus on issues concerning the success of those in the field. This meeting will highlight best practices to help the diverse scientific work force to succeed, and will address both the junior members of the field, as well as those who mentor and manage today’s diverse scientific workforce. Information on this meeting will be available at <http://wia2009.gsfc.nasa.gov>. The AAS has endorsed this meeting and I am a member of the organizing committee.

I attended the AURA Diversity Workshop on April 21-22 representing the CSWA. The workshop was attended by the Directors of the NOAO, NSO, Gemini and Space Telescope Institute as well as the human resource, Outreach, and senior business staff of AURA. CSWA member Hannah Jang-Condell (University of Maryland/NASA-GSFC) attended The 3rd International Women in Physics Conference in Seoul, South Korea. The meeting, held 7 to 10 October, was dedicated to celebrating the physics achievements of women throughout the world, networking toward new international collaborations, gaining skills for career success, and aiding the formation of active regional working groups to advance women in physics.

Each country presented information about its statistics and its activities to increase women's participation.

The CSWA has been working to increase our presence online.

1. Find our new and improved web page at [www.aas.org/cswa](http://www.aas.org/cswa)
2. We are continuing our weekly email newsletter. To subscribe to AASWOMEN go to <http://lists.aas.org/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/aaswlist> and fill out the form. To submit items for inclusion in the AASWOMEN newsletter, send email to [aaswomen@aas.org](mailto:aaswomen@aas.org). Access to past issues of AASWOMEN is available on our web page at <http://www.aas.org/cswa/AASWOMEN.html>.
3. We have inaugurated a Women in Astronomy blog, and we invite you to read and comment on it. You can find it at <http://womeninastronomy.blogspot.com/>.
4. We now have a page on Facebook that includes all of the entries on the Women in Astronomy blog and the AASWOMEN newsletter. You can find our page at, <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Committee-on-the-Status-of-Women-in-Astronomy/43977374494>