

AAS Committee on the Status of Women

Issue of December 13, 2019

eds: JoEllen McBride, Nicolle Zellner, Heather Flewelling, Maria Patterson, and
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1. Guest Post: Working to Level the Playing Field at NASA
From: JoEllen McBride via womeninastronomy.blogspot.com

By Joan Schmelz

A recently approved policy now allows NASA postdoctoral fellows the opportunity to continue receiving stipends during time away from work. This time away can be for a variety of family and medical issues, including a serious health condition, birth or adoption of a child, parental care, or other special circumstances. This is a major improvement over the old procedure, where stipends stopped while the fellows were absent from their posts.

Read more at

<http://womeninastronomy.blogspot.com/2019/12/guest-post-working-to-level-playing.html>

2. PhD bridge programmes as engines for access, diversity and inclusion
From: Alexander Rudolph [alrudolph_at_cpp.edu]

An article about PhD bridge programs written by myself with Kelly Holley-Bockelmann of Fisk-Vanderbilt and Julie Posselt of USC, has just been published in *Nature Astronomy* (link below). The article features the Fisk-Vanderbilt, Columbia, APS, and Cal-Bridge PhD bridge programs, as well as lessons learned from the programs that are applicable more widely in our field. In addition, the article is part of a larger collection of articles they have published on Diversity and Inclusion (link below).

I am submitting them to you in case you want to include this information in your next newsletter.

The article is free through the end of the AAS meeting in Hawai'i (January 8) so it would be great if you include it before then.

Read the PhD Bridge program article here

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41550-019-0962-1>

See *Nature's* Diversity and Inclusion collection here

<https://www.nature.com/collections/cagjjdfjaa/>

3. CSMA sponsored workshops and workshops of interest at AAS 235
From: Astronomy in Color [astronomyincolor_at_gmail.com]

In this special edition newsletter, we highlight a few AAS 235 workshops that require registration. It's not too late to register today! When you go to the registration page, click on the relevant day to see and select the individual workshops.

Click here for a full listing of workshop events.

CSMA sponsored workshops:

Self Care as an Act of Resistance for People of Color
Rest and Workflow for Marginalized Scientists:
How to Maintain Sustainable Success

Additional workshops of interest:

Teaching for Equity
Collective Blueprints for the Ideal Astronomy Mentor
LightSound: Learn to Build a Sonification Tool to Make Your Classes and Outreach Events More Inclusive (2 days)

Looking for connections, mentorship, or astronomers of color to invite to your department? You can find AAS astronomers who self-identify as people of color on the AAS website. Page can only be viewed by those with AAS membership. Anyone can add their name to the listing by going to

<http://bit.ly/csma-poc-roster-gform>

Subscribe to the CSMA newsletter at

<http://bit.ly/csma-newsletter-signup>

4. Gender and Sexual Minorities in Astronomy and Planetary Science Face Increased Risks of Harassment and Assault
From: Christina Richey [christina.r.richey_at_jpl.nasa.gov]

The big results are that 21% of LGBTQPAN women and gender minorities reported experiencing physical harassment, more than twice the incidence for cisgender, straight women, which at 9% is already quite alarming. Similarly, 47% of LGBTQPAN women and gender minorities experienced verbal sexual harassment compared with 40% of cisgender straight women (and just 3% of cisgender men). And whereas 62% of cisgender male respondents indicated that they had heard sexist comments from their peers at work, the same was true for 78% of cisgender straight women and for 81% of LGBTQPAN women and gender minorities.

Read the press release from the AAS at

<https://aas.org/press/gender-sexual-minorities-astronomy-planetary-science-risks>

Read the full paper at

<https://baas.aas.org/community/gender-and-sexual-minorities-in-astronomy-and-planetary-science/>

5. A Dynamical Systems Model of Power, Privilege and Leadership in Academia
From: Kathryn V. Johnston [kvj_at_astro.columbia.edu]

As the diversity of people in higher education grows, universities are struggling to provide inclusive environments that nurture the spirit of free inquiry in the presence of these differences. Throughout my career as an astronomer, I have witnessed these struggles first-hand. Exclusive cultures result in unfulfilled potential of all members of the institution -- students, administrators and faculty alike. This article draws on insights from dynamical systems descriptions of conflict developed in the social and behavioural sciences to present a model that captures the convoluted, interacting challenges that stifle progress on this problem.

[Eds note: This is included in the *Nature Astronomy* Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Collection.]

Read more at

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41550-019-0961-2>

6. Making Black Women Scientists under White Empiricism: The Racialization of Epistemology in Physics

From: Katie Eckert [kathleen.eckert_at_gmail.com]

By Chanda Prescod-Weinstein

'In this article I take on the question of how the exclusion of Black American women from physics impacts physics epistemologies, and I highlight the dynamic relationship between this exclusion and the struggle for women to reconcile "Black woman" with "physicist." I describe the phenomenon where white epistemic claims about science – which are not rooted in empirical evidence – receive more credence and attention than Black women's epistemic claims about their own lives. To develop this idea, I apply an intersectional analysis to Joseph Martin's concept of prestige asymmetry in physics, developing the concept of white empiricism to discuss the impact that Black women's exclusion has had on physics epistemology. By considering the essentialization of racism and sexism alongside the social construction of ascribed identities, I assess the way Black women physicists self-construct as scientists and the subsequent impact of epistemic outcomes on the science itself.'

Read more at

<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/full/10.1086/704991>

7. NextProf Science 2020 Opportunity at the University of Michigan

From: Michael Meyer [mrmeyer_at_umich.edu]

Early-career scientists and mathematicians are invited to participate in the NextProf Science 2020 workshop being offered at the University of Michigan on May 4-7, 2020. NextProf Science is aimed at future faculty-advanced doctoral students or postdoctoral fellows who are interested in an academic career in science at an exceptional academic research institution and who have demonstrated a commitment to diversity.

The NextProf Science workshop is free to participants, who must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents. Participants' expenses for travel, lodging, and meals will be covered. The deadline to receive all applications and reference letters is: January 19, 2020. If you have additional questions, please contact um-nextprof-science@umich.edu or contact the Department of Astronomy directly (<https://lsa.umich.edu/astro>).

Find the online application and additional information at

<http://sites.lsa.umich.edu/nextprof-science/>

8. Academia is now incompatible with family life, thanks to casual contracts

From: Nicolle Zellner [nzellner_at_albion.edu]

by Anonymous

I am once again approaching the end of another fixed-term research contract. I won't say how many I have had, but I can say that this last post was longer than most. I had some time to breathe. Time to finish papers from previous posts, time to devote to writing papers for this project before having to devote evenings and weekends to trying to find the next post. I have had more time to spend with my family and friends. I have had time to exercise and take care of myself physically and emotionally. I have had time to think and reflect.

I don't know what impact this lifestyle [of contract work] is having on my health, but it can't be good.

Read more at

<https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2016/dec/02/short-term-contracts-university-academia-family>

9. Universities may share past harassment findings

From: Nancy Morrison [nancyastrol26_at_gmail.com]

" ... major research universities are taking steps to penetrate the veil of silence that abets the practice of "passing the harasser." The Davis and San Diego campuses of the University of California system are conducting pilot programs that ask certain faculty candidates to waive some privacy protections, and earlier this month the University of Illinois Board of Trustees adopted the recommendations of a faculty group to conduct a similar pilot."

UC Davis is asking finalists for tenured positions to waive privacy protections and allow sharing of harassment findings by previous employers up to 8 to 10

years back. A few other universities are adopting other measures to combat sexual misconduct.

Read more at

<https://science.sciencemag.org/content/366/6469/1057>

10. Astronomy funder finds that gender diversity takes more than good intentions
From: JoEllen McBride [joellen.mcbride_at_gmail.com]

By Jeffrey Mervis

"Two years ago, the Heising-Simons Foundation launched a grants program designed to attract and retain more women in the male-dominated disciplines of physics and astronomy. It also started a postdoctoral fellowship aimed at developing talent in the emerging field of planetary astronomy.

Foundation officials assumed the two efforts would be synergistic, in that the fellowship would not only lead to more people studying objects outside the Solar System but would also contribute to the foundation's goal of erasing the gender imbalance in physics and astronomy. They were wrong: Only two of the 12 awardees in the fellowship's first two cohorts were women."

Read more at

<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2019/12/astronomy-funder-finds-gender-diversity-takes-more-good-intentions>

11. Diversity and inclusion in Australian astronomy
From: JoEllen McBride [joellen.mcbride_at_gmail.com]

By Lisa J. Kewley

"Australian astronomy is undergoing a great change in culture, diversity and inclusion through major nationwide and university-scale initiatives. These initiatives include prestigious women-only faculty hires, broad diversity targets, concrete activities to overcome implicit bias, and innovative initiatives to change the academic culture and environment. Many of these activities were precipitated by the Pleiades Awards programme run by the Astronomical Society of Australia and by initiatives developed within the Australia-wide Centres of Excellence in astrophysics. I provide an overview of the nationwide programmes that are making an important impact on diversity, culture and climate, and describe the most promising and innovative initiatives in Australian universities and institutions. The striking changes seen in Australian astronomy can be triggered in other countries by similar awards programmes initiated by national astronomical societies or Academies of Science."

[Eds note: This is included in the *Nature Astronomy* Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Collection.]

Read more at

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41550-019-0954-1>

12. Towards inclusive practices with indigenous knowledge
From: JoEllen McBride [joellen.mcbride_at_gmail.com]

By Aparna Venkatesan, David Begay, Adam J. Burgasser, Isabel Hawkins, Ka'iu Kimura, Nancy Maryboy, & Laura Peticolas

"Astronomy across world cultures is rooted in indigenous knowledge. We share models of partnering with indigenous communities involving collaboration with integrity to co-create an inclusive scientific enterprise on Earth and in space."

[Eds note: This is included in the *Nature Astronomy* Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Collection.]

Read more at

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41550-019-0953-2>

13. Why I teach growth mindset

From: JoEllen McBride [joellen.mcbride_at_gmail.com]

By Adam J. Burgasser

"The struggles of marginalized students, mentees and peers in astronomy and physics can be amplified by negative 'fixed' mindsets. Here are ways we can address mindset in our labs, our classrooms and ourselves."

[Eds note: This is included in the *Nature Astronomy* Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Collection.]

Read more at

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41550-019-0940-7>

14. I thought patriarchy in science was fading. Then I saw it in the data
From: JoEllen McBride [joellen.mcbride_at_gmail.com]

By Emma Thomas

'As I returned home from this year's [Women in Statistics and Data Science Conference](#), one word rang loudly in my ears: patriarchy.'

'In a presentation on the impact of gender on women's careers, Carnegie Mellon statistician Dalene Stangl boldly claimed that although the term may be out of favor, patriarchy is "alive and well" and that "[it happened to me.](#)" At first, there was little I recognized in Stangl's story. The term "patriarchy" is loaded with the history of gender oppression that, thanks to the determination of women like Stangl who came before me, seemed worlds apart from my own experience. I've had many male supporters and have never felt discriminated against, even as a female student in a male-dominated field. And yet, as Stangl spoke, I slowly realized that despite my initial resistance to the word itself, I had indeed encountered patriarchy – in the data from my own research.'

Read more at

<https://www.statnews.com/2019/12/10/patriarchy-fading-science-then-i-saw-it-in-the-data/>

15. In fieldwork, other humans pose as much risk to LGBTQIA+ people as the elements
From: JoEllen McBride [joellen.mcbride_at_gmail.com]

By Danny Haelewaters & Adriana Romero-Olivares

"Fieldwork is one of the most exciting experiences about doing research. It is also, in many cases, high-risk. During fieldwork, many things can go wrong, and most of those things cannot be helped. We cannot control the appearances of massive puddles in the middle of the road, critically damaging our transportation vehicles. We cannot control the thunderstorm that makes our study organisms disappear when we finally arrive at a remote field site after hours of climbing a mud-covered mountain.

"Sadly, this is not always the case for threats to our integrity as human beings, and we, as a scientific community, have done far too little to address this problem. People from underrepresented groups in the sciences such as people of color, women, and those who identify as LGBTQIA+ or gender nonconforming often are at higher risk of suffering abuse during fieldwork. This comes in the form of sexual harassment, sexual abuse, discrimination, and intimidation. Scientists who have experienced abuse often fear talking about it because they are traumatized and because they fear retaliation and backlash, especially if the perpetrators of abuse are colleagues or superiors – advisers and people at higher career stage."

Read more at

<https://massivesci.com/notes/diversity-fieldwork-field-work/>

16. Why are so few Nobel Prizes awarded to women?
From: JoEllen McBride [joellen.mcbride_at_gmail.com]

An informative cartoon illustrating the issues behind the lack of women who have been awarded Nobel Prizes.

Read more at

<https://www.vox.com/identities/2019/12/10/21003187/stem-nobel-prize-sexism-women-science>

17. Job Opportunities

For those interested in increasing excellence and diversity in their organizations, a list of resources and advice is here:

<https://aas.org/comms/cswa/resources/Diversity>

- Staff Scientist in Astronomy or Planetary Science at Carnegie Institution for Science, Washington DC

<https://jobs.carnegiescience.edu/jobs/staff-scientist-in-astronomy-or-planetary-science/>

- Director, Institute for Astronomy, University of Hawaii

<http://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/executivesearch/ifa/>

18. How to Submit to the AASWOMEN newsletter

To submit an item to the AASWOMEN newsletter, including replies to topics, send email to aaswomen_at_lists.aas.org

All material will be posted unless you tell us otherwise, including your email address.

When submitting a job posting for inclusion in the newsletter, please include a one-line description and a link to the full job posting.

Please remember to replace "_at_" in the e-mail address above.

19. How to Subscribe or Unsubscribe to the AASWOMEN newsletter

Join AAS Women List by email:

Send an email to aaswomen_at_lists.aas.org. A list moderator will add your email to the list. They will reply to your message to confirm that they have added you.

Join AAS Women List through the online portal:

Go to

<https://lists.aas.org/postorius/lists/aaswlist.lists.aas.org> and enter the email address you wish to subscribe in the 'Your email address' field. You will receive an email from 'aaswlist-confirm' that you must reply to. There may be a delay between entering your email and receiving the confirmation message. Check your Spam or Junk mail folders for the message if you have not received it after 2 hours.

To unsubscribe from AAS Women by email:

Send an email to aaswlist-leave_at_lists.aas.org from the email address you wish to remove from the list. You will receive an email from 'aaswlist-confirm' that you must reply to which will complete the unsubscribe.

Leave AAS Women or change your membership settings through the online portal:

Go to <https://lists.aas.org/accounts/signup> to create an account with the online portal. After confirming your account you can see the lists you are subscribed to and update your settings.

20. Access to Past Issues

<https://aas.org/comms/cswa/AASWOMEN>

Each annual summary includes an index of topics covered.

AASWomen Newsletter mailing list -- aaswlist@lists.aas.org
To unsubscribe send an email to aaswlist-leave@lists.aas.org