

Annual Report on the Committee on the Status of Women in Astronomy for 2014-2015

By Joan Schmelz and CSWA
(University of Memphis, jschmelz@memphis.edu)

The members of the 2014-15 Committee on the Status of Women in Astronomy (CSWA) are: Joan Schmelz (Chair, Univ. of Memphis), Caroline Simpson (Florida International Univ.), Nancy Morrison (Univ. of Toledo), Ed Bertschinger (MIT), David Charbonneau (CfA), Neil Gehrels (NASA-GSFC), Meredith Hughes (Wesleyan Univ.), Jessica Kirkpatrick (Chegg), Nicolle Zellner (Albion Coll.), John Johnson (CfA), Daryl Haggard (Amherst Coll.), and Christina Richey (NASA HQ).

Women in Astronomy Blogspot

The Women in Astronomy Blog topped 1,000,000 all-time page-views on 4/23/2015!

Congratulations to our blogger-in-chief, Jessica Kirkpatrick, and the entire blog rotation for reaching this remarkable milestone. Congratulations also to CSWA alums, Hannah Jang-Condell, the founder of the blog and the first blogger-in-chief, and to Laura Trouille, a continuing member of the blog rotation and the second blogger-in-chief.

The blog has continued to increase its readership as well as the range and frequency of its posts since its inception in May 2008. In the past 12 months (4/14-4/15) we have had 174,000 site-visits, over two times as many as 4/13-4/14, and six times as many as 4/12-4/14.

In the past 12 months, we published 160 posts and career profiles with an average number of ~2200 page-views per post (up from 1000 last year). We had two hugely popular posts this past year: one about “Shirtstorm” that received over 90,000 page-views, and one about Conversation Dominance that received over 20,000 page-views.

Our current rotation of regular bloggers includes: CSWA members Ed Bertschinger, Dave Charbonneau, Neil Gehrels, John Johnson, Jessica Kirkpatrick, Christina Richey, and Joan Schmelz; CSWA alumna Laura Trouille; and over 20 external contributors. Our writers span career stages from graduate student to full professor and include astronomers who have moved to careers outside academia. As a result of the diversity of our contributors, the blog is highly effective in addressing concerns, providing relevant resources, and giving advice to our readership across a wide range of career stages. In response to criticism that the blog was too focused on the perspective of straight, white women, in the past year we have sought out contributions from a more diverse set of bloggers, who have shared their experiences as women of color and LGBTQI women.

Some of the most popular topics of this past year include “Shirtstorm,” conversation dominance, sexual harassment, job/faculty searches, privilege, and LGBTQI perspectives. The blog is linked to share entries on Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, Google+ and LinkedIn. As a result, our readership

and exposure have increased significantly. Forty percent of our site traffic comes from Facebook, 7% from Twitter, 4% from Reddit, 3% from LinkedIn, and 2% from Google+. We are also seeing significant discussion of the blog posts in several Facebook Groups (Astronomers, Diversity in Physics and Astronomy). Indeed, these discussion fora have resulted in significantly more comments than can be found in the comments section associated with the blog itself.

Our partnerships with other professional science blogs, such as AstroBetter, Lady Paragons, Women in STEM, and AWIS, further increase our exposure and diversify our readership. We also are coordinating with other AAS committees (CSMA, WGLE) to seek out guest posts from those communities. The blog has become well known within the astronomy community.

<http://womeninastronomy.blogspot.com>

Activities at the 224nd AAS Meeting in Boston, MA

CSWA member Nick Murphy hosted a Town Hall: “Addressing Sexual Violence on College Campuses,” in which a representative from the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (BARCC) discussed how community awareness is instrumental in dismantling campus rape culture at our colleges and universities. She countered harmful myths about sexual violence and discussed research on repeat perpetration and acquaintance rape.

Commented [NM1]: I was there, and I recall only one representative.

The takeaway message is that our college campuses are not safe spaces. Sexual violence is endemic, with estimates of one in four college women experiencing a sexual assault during their time on campus. Disclosures by survivors of sexual violence to universities are often met with a culture of indifference, victim blaming, and even hostility. Survivors of color often experience racism when confronting university administrations and members of the queer and trans communities often have to deal with heterosexism and cissexism/transphobia. Male survivors often face skepticism. When disclosures of sexual violence are handled poorly, the results can have a disastrous effect on survivors.

Many organizations worldwide provide education about how to address sexual violence; training may even be offered by your institution. If you are located near Boston, BARCC offers a variety of trainings that can be held at colleges and universities. They have made available a useful guide for prevention of sexual violence on campus and on how to respond to disclosures of sexual assault. Another local group, The Network/La Red, provides community education and trainings to specifically address LGBTQ partner abuse. Nationwide organizations such as SCESA and INCITE! are working to end sexual violence against women, gender non-conforming, and trans people of color.

Activities at the 225rd AAS Meeting in Seattle, WA

CSWA sponsored a special session at the January 2015 AAS meeting to discuss the NSF ADVANCE program. This program began in 2001, stopped awarding grants in 2012, and invested over \$135 million in supported projects between 2001 and 2012. It endeavored to increase the representation and advancement of women in academic STEM careers by addressing specific aspects of academic and institutional culture that affected women faculty and staff

differently. Those aspects include, but are not limited to, stereotype threat, explicit and implicit bias, sexual harassment, lack of family leave support/policies that treat women equally, and lack of women in leadership and decision-making positions. As stated by the NSF ADVANCE summary, “The cumulative effect of such diverse factors has been to create infrastructural barriers that impact the number of women entering, persisting and advancing in STEM careers.” Another goal of the ADVANCE program was to “seminally contribute to and inform the general knowledge base on gender equity in the academic STEM disciplines.”

In the AAS Special Session, we highlighted the positive and most influential measurable outcomes of the NSF ADVANCE program towards meeting its goals, focusing on broadly-applicable best practices and knowledge gained, not just specific products or statistics. For example, if an institution increased participation of undergraduate women in STEM disciplines from 20% to 30%, *how* did they do that, what were their challenges and how did they overcome them, how do they plan to continue, and how is their strategy transferable to other institutions? In this session, we aimed to learn from the experiences of speakers with a diverse background in promoting the equity of women in STEM. We hoped to bring together more universal policies and recommended programs that can be agreed upon by the community, and ultimately to help equalize women’s (and, hopefully, all minorities’) participation and advancement in astronomy.

The speakers were: Virginia Valian, Distinguished Professor, Department of Psychology, Hunter College; Sue Rosser, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, San Francisco State University; Eve Riskin, Professor of Electrical Engineering and Associate Dean of Diversity and Access, University of Washington and Director of the ADVANCE Center for Institutional Change; and Caroline Simpson, Associate Professor of Physics, Florida International University, CSWA member. This session was organized by Johanna Teske and Neil Gehrels. Slides or notes from the talks are available on the CSWA web site:

<http://www.aas.org/cswa/jan15.html>

Other Meetings

The resources of CSWA were promoted at the women’s networking events at the November 2014 meeting of the Division for Planetary Sciences (DPS) Meeting in Tucson, AZ and at the March 2015 Lunar and Planetary Science Conference (LPSC) in The Woodlands, TX. At the DPS meeting, the discussion topics were “Powerful Communication” and “Being an Ally”. At the LPSC meeting, various topics were discussed among small groups, including careers outside of academia, imposter syndrome, and social media and your professional career. Additionally, the CSWA resources page and the site visit program were advertised. About 120 people were in attendance at the LPSC event, and funding for light refreshments was provided by the Professional Development Committee of the DPS.

Status Magazine

The editorial group of CSWA’s semi-annual magazine *Status* retained its personnel: Nancy Morrison as editor; Joan Schmelz (Univ. of Memphis) as acquisitions editor; Katy Garmany

(NOAO), Joannah Hinz (Univ. of Arizona), and Pat Knezek (NSF) as associate editors; and Meg Urry (Yale Univ.) as contributing editor.

All-electronic publication as a PDF document continued. In addition, selected articles are being posted to the Women in Astronomy blog so that readers can comment. The magazine is tending to include longer, more technical articles with many literature citations. For such articles, the blog manager has begun posting a short introduction with a link to the full article.

The 2014 June issue included: a report on the CSWA's survey on two-body careers; an article on workplace climate; an essay on diversity; and a report on male-female differences in math and verbal test scores.

The 2015 January issue (which appeared in February) included: an article on non-cognitive assessments as a supplement to traditional evaluation of applicants for graduate programs; a report on the effect of ADVANCE programs on the careers of junior and senior women faculty; and a report on the NAS conference on women of color.

During the past year, total visits to the Status web site,

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

numbered (according to Google Analytics) 637, not including visitors who accessed the PDF files via the direct link.

***AASWOMEN* Electronic Newsletter**

The CSWA continues to publish a weekly email newsletter called *AASWOMEN*. In 2014, Daryl Haggard replaced Michele M. Montgomery as Senior Editor. Currently, the regular editors are Daryl Haggard, Nicolle Zellner, Meredith Hughes, and Elysse Voyer (non-CSWA member). Caroline Simpson also acts as a backup editor and list administrator.

A typical issue of *AASWOMEN* contains: cross-posts of commentaries from the Women in Astronomy Blog; information about AAS special sessions, including CSWA events; requests for and responses to information and/or advice; links to news items about women in science; announcements of honors and awards given to women in science; information about upcoming programs and meetings; proposed bills or policy changes affecting women in science; and links to internship and job opportunities. Topics covered within the past year include:

- Advice on responding to bullying, sexual harassment, and unprofessional behavior, in person and online;
- Research and news on gender and unconscious bias, particularly in hiring;
- Coverage of current events, e.g. the Rosetta mission shirt debacle (“Shirtstorm”), and the lack of women in the ranks of Nobel Prize laureates;
- Promotion of the CSWA Survey on Workplace Climate and other surveys;
- Information on family-leave policies and childcare for graduate students and postdocs;

- Updates to the CSWA web pages on the statistics of invited women speakers at conferences and the numbers of women with tenure in astronomy;
- Academic and non-academic career paths in astronomy.

To increase readership, the newsletter is cross-posted on the Women in Astronomy Blog, and *AASWOMEN* editors now post the newsletters to the blog directly, rather than going through the blog administrator, Jessica Kirkpatrick. The newsletter is also cross-posted on the CSWA Facebook page and sometimes on Twitter. *AASWOMEN* also lists the table of contents of each new issue of *Status*.

As of April 2015, *AASWOMEN* increased its readership to 1162, with 70 new subscriptions in the last year. The newsletter's archives can be found at

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

Twitter & Facebook

Activity on the AAS CSWA Twitter account (@AAS_Women) continued to gather followers at a steady rate. By mid-April, the account had 848 followers, to be compared with 543 followers a year earlier and 274 followers the previous year. Research on the demographics of our followers is in progress.

Our Facebook page

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

likewise experienced growth in activity during the past year. As of April 17, 2015, it had 1,259 total 'Likes,' up from 902 a year previously. In a typical week, the page received three or four new 'Likes,' but there were some outliers with dozens of new 'Likes,' and in 2015 March there was a surge of 'Unlikes.' Anywhere from 200 to more than 20,000 people clicked on, liked, commented on, or shared the page each week (mean: 3100, median: 1628). Some of the peaks in activity coincide with obvious triggers like "Shirtstorm," but most are not as obvious as that. Many of the posts on this page are cross-posts from the Women in Astronomy blog.

CSWA Web Site

Compared with last year, the site underwent only modest development. No new resource pages were added, and the existing pages continued to be updated occasionally. Plans include a reorganization of the resource pages and modernization of the Women in Astronomy Database.

According to Google Analytics, the site as a whole received about 5,660 visitor sessions during the past year (mid-April to mid-April), down 14% from the previous year. The most popular resource page continued to be "Unconscious Bias" with 1,850 sessions, down 8%. The only one of the popular pages that increased its session total was the one on resuming a career after a break. Plans to address this drop in visitor numbers include updating and promoting the site more

frequently and implementing responsive web design for greater compatibility with mobile devices. Although mobile users account for only a small minority of our site acquisitions, they are the only segment of our user base that grew during the past year.

CSWA Survey on Workplace Climate

The CSWA Survey on Workplace Climate was designed to provide information regarding how many in the astronomical community encounter negative language, or experience verbal or physical harassment on the basis of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability status, or race and ethnicity. The survey was designed to request the same information at different stages in a respondent's career in order to understand whether astronomers encounter increased or varying types of harassment over time. The CSWA, through Christina Richey and Erica Rodgers, partnered with Kathryn Clancy of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to administer the proposed survey and analyze the survey data. The University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign gave the team IRB approval in January and the survey was conducted January 4th-March 15th. The survey resulted in 474 responses and 90 requests for follow-up interviews. The follow-up interview is designed to solicit input on the experiences planetary scientists have in their workplaces. Follow-up interviews will be done in April 2015, and the first results from the survey will be presented to the CSWA in the next two months, with an anticipated poster presentation by Richey at the Inclusive Astronomy conference.

CSWA Climate Site Visits for Astronomy Departments

In response to its first invitation, the CSWA performed a site visit on April 30, 2015. The three-person site visit team was warmly received in the department, and the scheduled meetings with department members were well attended. The team thanks the department chair for excellent support. Unexpected problems were identified and will be addressed for future visits. By June 1, the team will provide a confidential report to the department chair.

Two surveys, one for faculty and one for students (graduate and undergraduate) were prepared as part of the Climate Site Visit program. They were administered by the Statistical Research Center (SRC) of the American Physical Society, who also collected the data and provide reports for the site visit committee. The information from the surveys helped guide the site visit team during their visit to the requesting department. A CSWA subcommittee consisting of Ed Bertschinger, Meredith Hughes, and Caroline Simpson prepared the surveys with input from Carolyn Brinkworth and help from the staff of the SRC. Although it would have been valuable to gather detailed demographic data such as race/ethnicity and disability, this couldn't be done because the relatively small number of people surveyed for each department would make such data personally identifiable, which would then require approval for human subject research from an Institutional Research Board. The transient status of committee members on the CSWA prevented obtaining such approval from one of the committee's institutions. We were, however, able to include a question on gender identity that included an option to state an identity other than male/female.