

# **Implementation of a Mentoring Program for Junior Women in Physical Oceanography**

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## **LONG-TERM GOALS**

This proposed work, through its focus on the retention of women in the field of physical oceanography, will allow further capitalization on the investment the funding agencies and the universities have made on the education of women students. Essentially, this work seeks to stem the loss of intellectual capital from the physical oceanographic field.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The primary objective of this proposed work is to implement a mentoring program that meets these goals: (1) The program should provide continuity of mentoring from a young woman's graduate career, through her postdoctoral years to the early years of her permanent job. (2) The program should establish a collective rather than an individual responsibility within the physical oceanography community for the mentoring of junior women. (3) The program should provide a variety of mentoring resources and mentors for a range of issues. (4) The program should cast a wide net to avoid exclusiveness. (5) Involvement in this mentoring program should be open to those who self-identify as a physical oceanographer. Each of these goals is intended to make mentoring opportunities universally available and of higher quality by expanding the reach of mentoring opportunities beyond individual home institutions.

## **APPROACH**

A steering committee is primarily responsible for the plan to reach the objectives of this proposal. The steering committee members are:

Bob Beardsley (Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution),  
Amy Bower (Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution)  
Paola Cessi (Scripps Institution of Oceanography)  
Victoria Coles (University of Maryland)  
Rana Fine (University of Miami)  
Susan Lozier (Duke University)  
Julie McClean (Scripps Institution of Oceanography)  
Paola Rizzoli (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)  
LuAnne Thompson (University of Washington)

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The steering committee organized an NSF and ONR-funded workshop entitled Mentoring Physical Oceanography Women to Increase Retention (MPOWIR) that was conducted at the Airlie Center in Warrenton, Virginia on October 9-12, 2005. Twenty-nine physical oceanographers, men as well as women, assembled for the purpose of designing a mentoring program for junior women in the field of physical oceanography in order to help remove barriers in their career development. MPOWIR workshop participants designed a community-mentoring program that would provide continuity from the Ph.D. attainment through the early years of a young woman's scientific career. Importantly, the workshop participants decided to focus on the collective community responsibility for mentoring rather than on mentoring that matched a single junior scientist with a single senior scientist. The working hypothesis is that a network of mentors would better fulfill the various needs of a junior scientist. To make mentoring accessible to junior women in a wide-variety of positions and at different types of workplaces, workshop participants designed a program with three diverse elements: 1) Internet-based mentoring that reaches out to the community as a whole, 2) The Pattullo<sup>1</sup> conference, targeted to junior women, 3) Socials on mentoring that engage the broad community.

Support from DOE, NASA, NSF and ONR was secured in the spring of 2007 to implement the abovementioned programs. The ONR-funded component focuses on supporting the leadership effort of these programs.

## **WORK COMPLETED**

Since last spring when funding was secured for MPOWIR efforts, we have:

1. Updated and reinvigorated the MPOWIR webpage: [www.mpowir.org](http://www.mpowir.org).
2. Planned the Pattullo conference to take place in Charleston, South Carolina in May of 2008.
3. Planned a Town Hall Meeting for Ocean Sciences 2008 in Orlando. This meeting will focus on the topic of Dual Career Couples and will be advertised to all meeting participants.
4. Planned web-based mentoring groups and discussion forum. Both of these will be initiated once the new website is launched.
5. Collected statistics on graduation rates in physical oceanography.
6. Devised a survey for all (male and female) physical oceanographers: [www.mpowir.org](http://www.mpowir.org)

## **RESULTS**

The primary results to date are 1) the successful planning of the Pattullo Conference, 2) a survey for all junior physical oceanographers and 3) a new database with graduation statistics.

## **IMPACT/APPLICATIONS**

This proposed work aids efforts to create a scientific workforce whose diversity matches that of the student population and, in a broader sense, that of the U.S. population as a whole, by aiding the retention of women in the field of physical oceanography.

## TRANSITIONS

The intent of this proposal is to design this mentoring program for the physical oceanography community essentially as a pilot project that, if successful, could be expanded to include women and minorities in all areas of ocean sciences at a later date.

## RELATED PROJECTS

The PI is in close communication with the chair of the *Committee on the Status of Women in Computing Research*, a committee with a strong record of mentoring junior women since 1991.

## REFERENCES

*Committee on the Status of Women in Computing Research*: <http://www.cra.org/Activities/craw/>.

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