

Upcoming Issues

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OCEAN EXPLORER (tentative)

Larry Clark raised two important issues in his President's Column (Vol. 18, No. 3, September 2005), regarding the future of The Oceanography Society (TOS): the role of TOS in supporting the development of ocean observations, and the need for an Oceanographer Certification Program. As President-Elect of TOS, I am excited about lending my strong support for both of these issues, and would like to add some additional comments regarding the latter.

The time has never been more opportune for building a strong, diverse and well-identified cadre of oceanographic professionals. There are two fundamental reasons for my stating this. In the positive context, we now have some extraordinary opportunities for showcasing our field—both in terms of its valuable contributions to society, and in terms of its inherently fascinating nature. A certification program would give us yet another tool for enhancing the visibility of our community (not unlike the manner in which the American Meteorological Society certification logo plays so prominently and is so publicly visible on weather broadcasts in the media). And from another perspective (one which I have personally felt after nearly 20 years of working in the public sector) we, as a community, must ensure that the quality of the research, products, and services in our field are held to the highest standards—especially as society comes to depend on these “deliverables” more and more. With the emergence of operational observing systems, policy-oriented oceanographic research, and standards for marine science education, TOS (working with other appropriate professional groups) will become increasingly active in providing decision-makers and policy developers with some sense of accreditation of the products they are receiving; a certification program can ensure that the developers and deliverers of these products are recognized as the most qualified.

As Larry stated in his column, “A transformed TOS could be a leader and key player in a professional certification program for oceanographers.” I look forward to working with our membership in making that happen.

Rick Spinrad

TOS President-Elect

I first heard the statistic you used [in your December 2005 column] about the gender inequality in physical oceanography at a seminar given at the University of Miami. As I stated at that seminar, the statistic given takes a very university-centric view of women in oceanography as women working in federal laboratories, NASA, the Navy, etc. typically do not submit NSF proposals. I am concerned that by only addressing women in academia you are doing a disservice to the many women practicing physical oceanography in other areas. Hopefully, there will be a more representative survey done in the future that does recognize these women.

Bob Molinari

NOAA/AOML

Editor's Note: Susan Lozier (Duke University), chair of the Mentoring Physical Oceanography Women to Increase Retention (MPOWIR) workshop, informed me that the organizing committee used the NSF statistic as broadly representative of the retention rate in general. They used this statistic not because they are interested solely in the retention of women in academia, but because those were the only numbers available at the time. Because their overall goal is to create a community mentoring effort for all junior women in physical oceanography, they had representation from a broad spectrum of workplaces at the workshop: government labs, universities, research institutions, funding agencies, and other workplaces that employ physical oceanographers. One of the goals of their effort is to assess whether these workplaces differ in the hiring and retention of women oceanographers. You may learn more about the MPOWIR effort, including the October 2005 workshop report and participant list, at www.mpowir.org.

Ellen Kappel

Editor