

Promoting JEDI and Addressing Sexual Harassment in Ocean Science
A Proposal to Establish TOS Ad-Hoc Task Force

Evidence suggests that ethnic and racial diversity remain extremely low in earth, atmospheric and ocean science disciplines in the United States (Bernard et al., 2018, Dutt, 2020). Barriers that prevent women and underrepresented minorities from participating in these disciplines are many, including structural, social and cultural barriers such as limited exposure to Geosciences in formative years of education, toxic and non-supportive work climate, lack of role models, lack of a sense of belonging, non-alignment of promotion and tenure incentives with aspirations of women and underrepresented minorities, etc. A recent report by the National Academies of Sciences (NAS, 2018) provides evidence of widespread sexual harassment in sciences. One recommendation outlined in the report reads, “Encourage involvement of professional societies and other organizations” in efforts to combat harassing and discriminatory behavior. Specifically, the NAS report calls on professional societies to provide support and guidance to those of its members who have been the targets of harassment, and do all they can to promote a culture of civility and respect.

Several professional and scientific societies such as the American Geophysical Union (AGU), American Meteorological Society (AMS), American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), are taking action to re-examine ways in which they promote justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (JEDI), and to bolster policies to combat sexual harassment in sciences. As The Oceanography Society (TOS) reflects on its past and plans for future, there is a tremendous opportunity to examine ways in which JEDI can be integrated within TOS in a holistic manner, assess the effectiveness of broadening participation efforts, and promote policies that prevent discrimination, sexual harassment and professional misconduct in ocean sciences. To this end, we propose that TOS establish an ad-hoc committee that examines these topics in depth documenting ways in which TOS is addressing JEDI and sexual harassment, reviews existing TOS policies and procedures, and makes recommendations to the TOS Council for Society-wide improvements.

Literature Cited

Bernard, R. E., & Cooperdock, E. H. (2018). No progress on diversity in 40 years. Nature Geoscience, 11(5), 292-295.

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