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## Taking Action: Two Years after the ASP Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee's Call to Action

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# Taking Action: Two Years after the ASP Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee's Call to Action

By the ASP DEI Committee

**T**he three main goals of the ASP [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee](#) are to (1) build a pipeline that overcomes structural barriers of entry for underrepresented groups of scientists who wish to engage in natural products research, (2) work with members of the ASP to create a more equitable, inclusive, and supportive community, and (3) recognize and highlight the contributions that members from underrepresented communities make to the ASP. In the summer of 2020, we published an article for the *ASP Newsletter* that described a series of actions to support these three goals. Here we provide an update on what the committee, the society, and the community have accomplished together in 2021–2022 under the leadership of co-chairs Drs. Lesley-Ann Giddings and Christine Salomon.

## **BUILD A PIPELINE TO OVERCOME STRUCTURAL BARRIERS OF ENTRY**

- We accepted our second cohort of students to our ASP Summer Research Fellowship (SRF) program to increase the representation of Black, Indigenous, and Latinx (BIL) scientists in natural products research. This program funds summer research experiences for undergraduates from historically underrepresented groups in our membership. The ASP Fellows and the ASP Foundation generously provided funds to support this program. Our second cohort was comprised of four fellows, and Dr. Giddings continued to lead weekly professional development workshops with the assistance of several ASP members (meeting virtually for 11 weeks) to help foster community and provide a series of training seminars and exercises designed to prepare the cohort for applying to graduate school. We also procured funding through an anonymous donation for travel for fellows (from 2021 and 2022 cohorts) to the annual ASP meeting in Charleston, SC, and six students attended. Three fellows presented research posters, and we also organized a SRF reception on July 24, 2022 with

former and current fellows and the DEI committee. We also took advantage of the meeting being in person to advertise the program to potential mentors and students in the poster sessions. The program concluded this summer with a highly successful webinar on August 11, 2022, in which each of the trainees presented their summer research to the ASP community (more than 80 participants). To ensure that the program continues, we are submitting a National Science Foundation Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) grant to secure three-year funding to support fellow stipends, travel, housing, and lab materials. Drs. Brian Murphy (PI) and Marcy Balunas (Co-PI) will be taking the lead to fund ten fellows. This has been a collaborative effort with the PIs as well as Drs. Christine Salomon, Eduardo Caro, and Lesley-Ann Giddings.

- At the ASP meeting in the summer of 2019 (Madison, Wisconsin) we launched the ASP Ambassador's Program. Three ASP Ambassadors (Drs. Salomon, Katherine Zink, and Sandra Loesgen) were appointed for a three-year term and are working (with support from the ASP) to increase the participation of individuals from underrepresented groups in our society. The ASP Ambassador program has been extended due to the pandemic, and although outreach has been somewhat hampered by the conditions of the pandemic, ambassadors have attended virtual conferences, such as the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minoritized Scientists (ABRCMS), Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS), and American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES); they also have given seminars (University of Mississippi and Microbiology & Cell Science, IFAS University of Florida).

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### CREATE AN EQUITABLE COMMUNITY/EDUCATE

- Our committee has requested to become a standing ASP committee as equity and inclusion are principles that must be maintained throughout the duration of a society's existence. This will be voted on by our membership in the upcoming year.
- We hosted a webinar titled "Managing Inclusive Excellence in Academia" led by Dr. Rigoberto Hernandez from Johns Hopkins University. The recording is freely available to members at this [link](#). A summary of the seminar was written as an article in the summer 2022 *ASP Newsletter* (volume 58, issue 2).
- Arguably the most important factor that determines success and persistence in science is mentorship, which is particularly important for individuals from routinely marginalized groups. As part of our ongoing efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the natural product sciences, the DEI committee organized a lunch session on mentorship on July 26, 2022 at the ASP annual meeting. This session was generously sponsored by Proctor & Gamble. Drs. Shanina Sanders-Johnson (Spelman College) and Marvella Ford (Medical University of South Carolina) shared their research findings and personal experiences as they relate to the mentorship of students and faculty. We plan to continue to organize DEI workshop sessions at future ASP meetings.
- We surveyed our membership via an e-mail to members and a link posted on the front page of the ASP website to assess how we could improve support for childcare. As of July 18, 2022, we had 34 responses to the [survey](#). To date, one-fourth of the respondents stated that lack of childcare has affected their decision to attend a meeting. About half stated they would be very likely to use free childcare services but were less likely if this was at a cost to the member. Affordable, family-friendly hotel rooms seemed most important to the respondents as well as adjusting the format of networking events. We are continuing to look at ways we could support our members with childcare. Please let us know if you have any suggestions, and plan to fill out the survey if you haven't yet done so.

### RECOGNIZE AND HIGHLIGHT CONTRIBUTIONS FROM UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS

- Over the past year, we have written [articles](#) for each ASP newsletter as part of the "Taking Action" column. We will continue this column in the coming year. Anyone interested in writing about DEI topics can contact Lesley-Ann Giddings ([lgiddings@smith.edu](mailto:lgiddings@smith.edu)).
- The ASP DEI Committee is working with conference organizers to ensure that the presenters at ASP meetings include sufficient representation of women, people of color, and others from historically underrepresented groups. We are also encouraging the use of the meeting [guidelines](#) we drafted in 2020–2021 to accomplish this. We welcome suggestions for speakers at future meetings!

The ASP Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee is comprised of Drs. Lesley-Ann Giddings (co-chair; [lgiddings@smith.edu](mailto:lgiddings@smith.edu)); Christine Salomon (co-chair and ambassador; [csalomon@umn.edu](mailto:csalomon@umn.edu)); Nadja Cech (member and former co-chair); Esther Guzmán (member and former co-chair); Brian Murphy (member); Katherine Rose Watts (member); Jackie Winter (member); Wendy Strangman (member); Sandra Loesgen (ambassador); Eduardo Caro (member); Laura Stoll (member); Kevin Tidgewell (member); Katherine Zink (ambassador); and Glenroy Martin (member)

We are grateful for the contributions, support, and partnership from the ASP Executive Committee, the ASP Fellows, and the ASP community that allowed us to do this important work. While we are proud of the accomplishments described above, we recognize that there are many more endeavors that our society could undertake toward the goal of creating a more inclusive and equitable ASP. We invite all of you, members of our community, to reach out to us (contact information above) with ideas and to work with the committee on future initiatives. ■