



Table of Contents

Chair’s Letter..... 1

SODEI Task Forces..... 2-3

- ▶ Admissions and Recruiting
- ▶ International Scholars and the Allyship program

Astrocharlas..... 4

GEMS 4

College of Science DEI committee
Faculty success subcommittee
update.....5

Committee members6

Committee members

- Peter Behroozi (Chair, faculty)
 - Mojgan Aghakhanloo (postdoc)
 - Rachael Amaro (grad. student)
 - Gurtina Besla (faculty)
 - Vivian Carvajal (grad student)
 - Katia Cunha (faculty)
 - J. Serena Kim (faculty)
 - Christopher Willmer (faculty)
-

Our Website

<https://www.as.arizona.edu/steward-diversity-and-inclusiveness-committee>

<https://www.as.arizona.edu/diversity-inclusion> (Steward Diversity Website)

Chair’s Letter by Peter Behroozi

We are lucky to be working in a time of increasing awareness of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and of their benefits. Our committee is charged with: 1) building a more inclusive climate for staff, students, postdocs, and faculty; 2) improving recruitment and retention of people from diverse backgrounds, and 3) improving mentoring to provide equitable opportunities for career success.

These are enormous tasks, but we are also not alone in this effort. We are extremely grateful to the grassroots [SODEI](#) (Steward Observatory Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) initiative, which has task forces addressing admissions, climate, international scholars, and recruiting. SODEI is always looking for new members, so I very strongly encourage you to join if you are passionate about improving Steward (contact Rachael Amaro, rcamaro@email.arizona.edu). SODEI is a much larger team than our committee, and so it has also been responsible for the majority of the most visible improvements (summarized below) in DEI at Steward since SODEI’s founding.

One of our committee’s main priorities in the coming year is to bring some of the changes recommended in the [AAS Diversity and Inclusion Task Force Report](#) and the [AIP TEAM-UP Report](#) to Steward. These reports both emphasize that awareness of diversity challenges in astronomy and physics is not by itself sufficient to improve access to astronomy careers. Instead, there are systemic factors beyond the control of individual students, postdocs, or faculty members—including financial, educational, mentoring, environmental, and family factors—that are best addressed at the departmental and national levels. We hope to guide Steward to address the barriers to full awareness and participation in astronomy, and will be providing opportunities to discuss the recommended changes and hear your feedback on them.

In the meantime, we know that many are feeling the effects of the prolonged pandemic that has sapped everyone’s time and energy in so many different ways. We are grateful to those who are able to contribute their time and efforts to improving DEI at Steward, and that includes those of you who are simply trying to stay afloat. Your self-preservation now is both an act of defiance and a statement of hope that better days will come. All of us hope that you will continue caring for yourself and your family as much as you can, and to be sensitive when others need time to do the same.

Other resources

- College of Science DEI committee ([Click here](#))
- Office of Diversity & Inclusion ([Click here](#))
- AAS Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion in Astronomy Graduate Education ([Click here](#))
- Cal-Bridge program ([Click here](#))
- U. Arizona Equity, Inclusion & Title IX ([Click here](#))
- U. Arizona Ombuds Program ([Click here](#))
- Campus Counseling and Psych Services (CAPS) ([Click here](#))
- LGBTQ+ Inclusivity in Physics and Astronomy: A Best Practices Guide is available ([Click here](#)).

U. Arizona Student Resource Centers:

- African American Student Association ([Click here](#))
- Asian Pacific American Student Association ([Click here](#))
- Adalberto & Ana Guerrero Student Center ([Click here](#))
- Disability Resource Center ([Click here](#))
- Immigrant Student Resource Center ([Click here](#))
- LGBTQ Affairs ([Click here](#))
- Native American Student Affairs ([Click here](#))
- Women and Gender Resource Center ([Click here](#))
- Veterans Education and Transition Services ([Click here](#))

Recognizing the Contributions of the SO Community

We are fortunate to have so many members of the Steward community who are committed to improving DEI at Steward. Although many programs, including those below, are officially extramural (outside the governance of the department and University), everyone has benefited from their work, and so we feel it important to periodically highlight their accomplishments. In this and future newsletters, we will include news updates from a sampling of extramural programs, gradually covering the amazing work that our community is doing.

SODEI Task Forces

Since its inception in Summer 2020, SODEI has made great strides towards creating a more equitable department. In only 4 semesters, your devoted peers volunteered their valuable time to (1) listening to concerns, (2) identifying the solvable issues, and (3) creating solutions to those issues. We are proud of and inspired by the SODEI members who care so much about improving our department for the sake of everyone.

SODEI Homepage: <https://sites.google.com/view/sodei>

Admissions and Recruiting Task Force

The SODEI Admissions Task Force seeks to understand sources of systematic bias in the admissions process (applications, admission, acceptance), to propose systemic changes where necessary to reduce these biases, and to educate admissions committee members on overcoming the remainder. In our first year, we focused on removing barriers facing applicants to our graduate program, and in our second year we have joined forces with the Recruiting & Retention Task Force to gather feedback on Steward graduate admissions and make changes to address problems identified in that feedback.

Some highlights include:

- We successfully advocated for the removal of GRE scores as a graduate application requirement.
- We worked closely with the 2021 Admissions Committee to review and revise the application questions and the rubric by which applications are evaluated.
- We created and continue to maintain a set of resources for our applicants to offer guidance and tips for completing their graduate school applications.
- We worked with the Recruiting & Retention Task Force to support their efforts during the 2021 prospective student visit.
- We surveyed the 2021 class of prospective students to assess the usefulness and accessibility of information available to our applicants.
- We continue to advocate for the re-inclusion of graduate students on the Admissions Committee, and have provided graduate student consultants to the Committee in the meantime.
- We are currently working with the Admissions Committee and Steward IT to create a new graduate admissions page for the Steward website to improve the accessibility and clarity of information and resources

Examples of Steward Observatory Initiatives to Promote Diversity & Inclusion in STEM

1. Diversity Journal Club
2. Steward Postdoc Mentoring Program
3. Mentorship and Education in SCience for Tucson (MESCI)
4. Astrocharlas - Spanish Astronomy Lecture Series
5. TIMESTEP: Tucson Initiative for Minority Engagement in Science and TEchnology Program
6. Tucson Women in Astronomy (TWA)
7. UA Native American STEM students
8. Warrior-Scholar Project (UA branch)
9. Women in STEM Student Council
10. Black Hole PIRE Project
11. The Allyship program (SODEI International Scholars TF)
12. New Physics and Astronomy Faculty Workshop
13. SAGANET.ORG (Social Action for a Grassroots Astrobiology Network)

Bridge Partnership programs

[Cal-Bridge Program](#) to promote diversity among our graduate student applicant pool.

presented to our applicants.

We hope to publish the new grad admissions webpage soon and gather feedback to assess the impact of our efforts so far so that we can prepare for next year's admissions cycle.

International Scholars Task Force

The International Scholars Task Force is an initiative of dedicated volunteers from different departments (Astronomy, LPL, Physics) and levels (graduate students, post-docs, and faculties) who are strong advocates for international scholars. The task force has two main goals. First, we want to support international graduate students and postdocs in their transition to living and working in Tucson and create a support network so that they can thrive during their time here. Second, we wish to foster a climate of respect, appreciation, and exchange among the different cultures in our community. To achieve these goals, we have already organized several initiatives and we are working on more for the coming months. Moving from a different country can feel overwhelming. To help new international students and postdocs in the process, we compiled a comprehensive checklist that collects all the various tasks that have to be completed in the first few months. We also devised and implemented an "**Allyship program**" that partners incoming scholars with local ones (domestic and international) to provide tangible help (e.g., giving a ride from the airport) and to connect and develop social bonds. In addition to this, we organized some events to showcase the cultures in our department and others to connect our community. You can find pictures of these events on our website. Our task force is always thrilled to welcome new members.

URL: <https://sites.google.com/view/sodei/international-scholars>

Task Force Members



The world at your table: SODEI international scholars task force virtually shared recipes via zoom during the pandemic (May 2021).

Communication Portal

The SO D&I committee welcomes your thoughts and suggestions on making Steward the best place possible to work and thrive.

We can be reached via email ("*so-diversity-input*" address at the domain *list.arizona.edu*)

U Arizona resources

continued

BEST (Bias Education and Support Team) from UA

The purpose of the BEST is to help support and educate the campus community on how bias related actions may affect others.

<https://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/BEST>.

OMBUDS program relaunched in Fall 2021. The OMBUDS program was relaunched in Fall 2021 to serve as "*confidential, informal, impartial, and independent resource for effective communication, collaboration and conflict management*". It serves all levels of UA employees and students.

<https://ombuds.arizona.edu>

Lighthouse Reporting system: Ethics and Compliance

Hotline you can report a concern related to ethics and compliance via on-line or via Hotline number: 866-364-1908. This is not for emergencies or crimes.

<https://www.lighthouse-services.com/arizona/>



Spanish Lecture Series (Astrocharlas)

Astrocharlas es una serie de charlas públicas de astronomía en el Observatorio Steward que se realiza completamente en español. Astrocharlas ocurre una vez por semestre y es completamente abierto al público. Es la única serie de charlas públicas que se realiza completamente en español en la Facultad de Ciencias.

Astrocharlas is a series of public astronomy talks at the Steward Observatory that is conducted entirely in Spanish. Astrocharlas occurs once a semester and are completely open to the public, and is the only such series in the College of Science of the University of Arizona. It is the only series of public talks that is conducted entirely in Spanish in the Faculty of Sciences.



Photo with recent speaker (04/25/22)
(left to right)
Karla Paredes (Astro Undergrad)
Dr Begoña Vila (Speaker)
Paulina Sotos (Astro Undergrad)
Raphael Hviding (Grad Director)
Nick Schragal (Grad Director)
Zach Shuster (Astro Undergrad)

Organizers: Gurtina Besla, Raphael Hviding, Nicolas Garavito Camargo, Tom Fleming, Dennis Zaritsky.

URL: <https://www.as.arizona.edu/astrocharlas/>

GEMS

The Gender Minorities at Steward (GEMS) group at the Dept. of Astronomy and Steward Observatory provides social opportunities and career advice/support to gender minorities in an effort to support the participation and experiences of gender minorities in astronomy, and build lasting relationships and networks. GEMS welcomes people of all genders who are

College of Science Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee

<https://science.arizona.edu/diversity-inclusion>

References

- (1) Kimmy Y. (2022, February 14), Anti-Asian hate crimes increased 339 percent nationwide last year, report says. NBC News, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/anti-asian-hate-crimes-increased-339-percent-nationwide-last-year-repo-rcna14282>

AAPI Data: <https://aapidata.com>

Committee Member Highlight



Rachael Amaro: "Transforming our workplace into an environment where the wants and needs of graduate students are *transparently* listened to and considered is my goal."

interested in improving gender equity in the field of astronomy, and we particularly encourage those who identify as gender minorities (e.g, transgender, nonbinary, female) to join us.

Organizers: Lily Whitler,

URL: <https://www.as.arizona.edu/gems-group>

College of Science Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee - Faculty Success Subcommittee

Serena Kim (Faculty success subcommittee member)

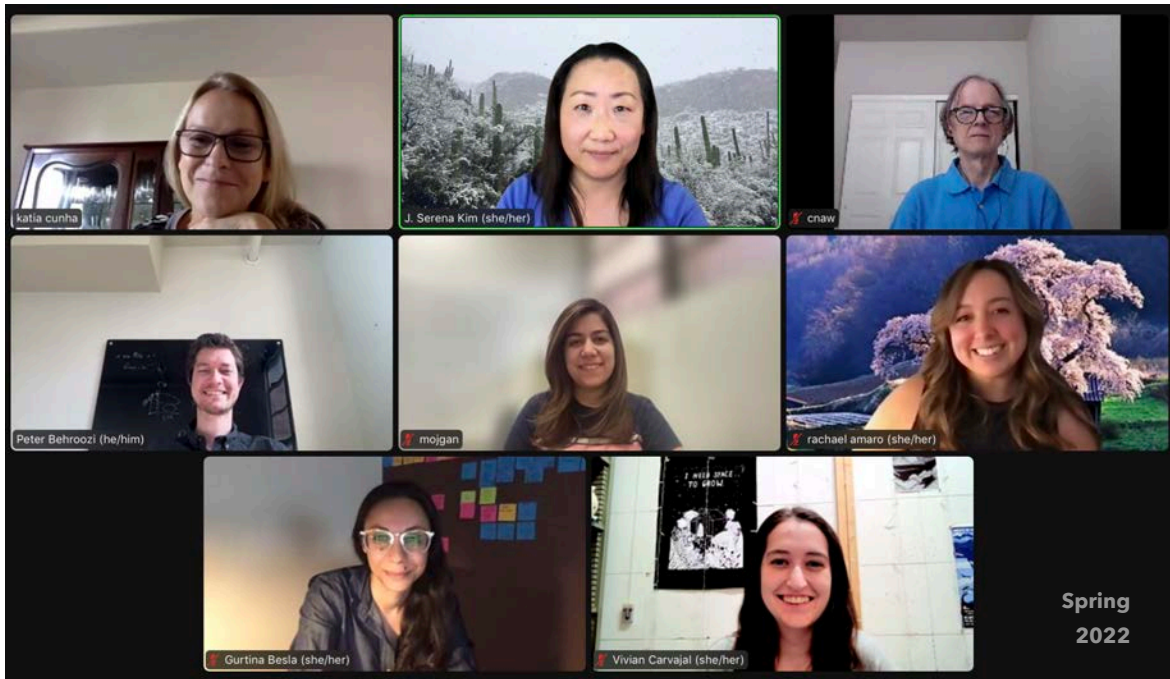
The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee of the College of Science has three subcommittees in 2020-2022: *Staff Success, Student Success, and Faculty Success*. I have served as a member of the faculty subcommittee since the Fall 2020. The faculty success subcommittee has met since the Fall 2020 to discuss and work on various DEI related issues and recommendations, some of which have been presented and discussed during the meetings with Dean Grazione and Vice Provost Romero during the Spring 2022 semester. Some of the recommendations touched on topics, such as protection of vulnerable faculty when speaking out of DEI issues and accountability; tenure process modification; annual performance reviews to value DEI work and begin integrating DEI work into department culture with incentives.

The committee has started the Spotlight series in the College of Science (COS) newsletter to feature a student/staff/faculty, who has worked hard and shown leadership on DEI. We plan to have a video series to feature members of CoS who have contributed to DEI efforts in the upcoming semester.

There have been deep concerns about the rapid increase of AAPI hate crimes since the start of pandemic. We have seriously discussed the alarming increase of hate crime against Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) community (including international Asian students, staff and faculty) on and off campus during the pandemic since Spring 2020. The nation-wide increase is reported to be 339% according to NBC news as of Feb 2022 (1), and there have been a number of related articles throughout the US. Over 25% of graduate students and 12% of faculty members in CoS are from the AAPI community. No physical attack/violence on campus due to Anti Asian Hate Crime has been officially reported in the U Arizona community. However, various levels of anti-Asian episodes have been experienced by the CoS community, yet this issue has not been adequately addressed. There have been reports about anti-Asian episodes in public spaces, e.g., in grocery stores, public transportation, trails, etc. Feeling scared or afraid in public as AAPI members of the community is common. The committee has sent a letter and met with Dean Garzione regarding the AAPI issues to draw attention to this very issue and made recommendations. The committee is expected to report and discuss the problems and the committee's recommendations to the department heads in the Fall 2022 semester.

Committee members

COMMITTEE AT WORK (left to right, top to bottom)
Katia Cunha, Serena Kim, Christopher Willmer
Peter Behroozi (chair), Mojgan Aghakhanloo, Rachael Amaro,
Gurtina Besla, Vivian Carvajal



Newsletter editors: Serena Kim and Katia Cunha

