September 23, 2021

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Subject: DPS Partnerships with Outside Organizations

From: Amy Mainzer, DPS Chair

To: All relevant leadership within DPS and NSBP

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Summary

This memo outlines a framework for developing and maintaining partnerships between the AAS’s Division for Planetary Sciences (DPS; <https://dps.aas.org/>) and other outside organizations that support minoritized communities in planetary science. The first such partnership encompassed in this memo is with the National Society of Black Physicists (NSBP; <https://nsbp.org/>). Additional partnerships may be developed and incorporated into this memo in future drafts.

1. Introduction

DPS seeks to facilitate the involvement and participation in planetary science of more students/scientists belonging to racial/ethnic groups that have been historically underrepresented in the planetary science discipline. A workforce survey initiated by the DPS (Hendrix & Rathbun 2020) has clearly quantified the degree of underrepresentation, with African American/Black, Indigenous, and LatinX/Hispanic scientists and students being most impacted. While Rivera-Valentín et al. (2021) have shown that there is some very modest growth in the numbers of LatinX/Hispanic and Indigenous planetary scientists, this analysis revealed essentially zero improvement in the numbers of African American/Black planetary scientists over nearly the last two decades, and all of these groups remain critically underrepresented in planetary science.

To attempt to improve representation in planetary science, DPS has created a new fund[[1]](#footnote-1) to support attendance of scientific meetings for DPS members who are also members of Black/African American, Indigenous, and/or Latinx communities. At present, the fund has approximately $100,000 available from contributions from the DPS Committee, Elsevier, and other individuals. At this level, assuming an average rate of return of 4% interest, the DPS would be able to support roughly $4,000 of meeting-related expenses per year in perpetuity.

In addition, DPS will seek strategic partnerships with outside organizations that represent the interests of planetary scientists and students who identify as members of communities that are critically underrepresented in this discipline, as outlined above. This memo defines the specific terms of these partnerships in the following sections.

2. Framework for these partnerships

DPS is a well-established and strong planetary science organization, with access to many organizational and fiscal reserves. However, this organization is (presently) similar to the planetary science community in that its membership and leadership are predominantly composed of those with historical representation. Organizations that support minoritized communities within STEM provide additional and often novel networking connections, as well as clearer information about barriers to equity, inclusion, and access that hamper diversity increases within planetary science. Partnerships that bring together the will and resources of these organizations should benefit both DPS and their partner(s).

To do that, it is important that DPS:

* respect the identity and autonomy of the partner organization and their members;
* abide and assist the aspirations and desires of the partner organization and their members; *and*
* commit to long-term plans that will benefit the growth, well-being, and missions of those organizations and their members (Boss, 2020).

Additionally, it is important to recognize that it is likely that some members of the planetary science community will have pre-existing connections to the partnered minority-serving STEM professional society. Such intersectionality is valuable to the health of the partnership. Since minority-serving STEM professional societies have traditionally catered to the mentoring, career growth, and personal support of their members in a unique and critical way, care should be taken so that planning/implementation of the partnership does not cause members of minority-serving STEM professional societies to feel they need to identify with one organization/identity over the other.

3. NSBP Partnership, established in 2020

The following information is based on discussion between DPS and NSBP-EPSS leaders in December, 2020.

3.1. Background:

* NSBP Aims: The broad goal of the NSBP’s Earth and Planetary Systems Sciences (EPSS) section is in helping African American/Black scientists and students build relationships within the planetary science community; in particular, to identify African American/Black students/scientists with an interest in planetary science and facilitate their networking and career growth. The annual NSBP meeting is typically well advertised to and supported by Physics faculty and students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), with many from HBCUs planning to attend (including students, with support commonly included in advisors’ budgets). Registration for the NBSP meeting also usually covers meals. Thus, travel support to the NSBP meeting for students/scientists from HBCUs is not a strong need. However, this conference is less well-known through the rest of academia, and advertisement to and travel support for underrepresented racial minority (URM) students/scientists from predominantly white institutions would be helpful.
* An aim of the present leads for the EPSS session is to grow and energize this session and increase knowledge within NSBP of planetary science research and pathways into planetary science careers.
* Of particular focus are students and early career scientists. Given the small number of mid- and late-career African American/Black researchers in our field, assisting students and early career researchers seems to be the most effective way to increase racial diversity within planetary science.
* There is interest is in increasing cross-membership (DPS and NSBP) for students/scientists of color (especially African American/Black scientists), and ensuring more scientists in general are aware of/value this society and the resources it presents for URM students/scientists.

3.2 Actions

NSBP will:

* Identify representatives to serve as the Point(s) of Contact for NSBP. (At present, these are the two (2) NSBP-EPSS session Chairs.)
* Advertise the annual DPS meeting and DPS-NSBP partnership to its members.
* Select an early career student or researcher for recognition in the newly-created DPS-NSBP Outstanding Speaker Program. This program is documented in a separate MOU dated September 23, 2021.

DPS will:

* Identify representatives to serve as the Point(s) of Contact for DPS. (This will include a member of the DPS Professional Climate and Culture Subcommittee (PCCS)).
* Advertise the annual NSBP meeting and DPS-NSBP partnership to its members.
* Create and publicize the DPS-NSBP Outstanding Speaker Program that will recognize outstanding early career researchers and give them wide exposure in the planetary science community by facilitating and sponsoring science talks. This program is documented in a separate MOU dated September 23, 2021.
* Facilitate communication, as needed, between the NSBP-EPSS leads and the planners for any Planetary Scientists of Color event at DPS to ensure that NSBP is highlighted during the event and that NSBP-EPSS leads collaborate with the event organizers.
* Encourage DPS leadership to attend and participate in the annual NSBP meeting.
* Continue to support attendance of the DPS and/or NSBP annual meetings through its new URM travel [fund](https://dps.aas.org/Inclusivity/support-underrepresented-minority-communities-planetary-science), with an initial emphasis on supporting early career scientists and students from HBCUs and other MSIs. We note, however, that this emphasis may evolve as the program develops and that at no time will it be exclusive: underrepresented minority students and early career researchers from majority institutions will also be considered.
* In accordance with the MOU documenting the speakers’ program, the DPS Chair will invite the NSBP representative(s) to attend at least one DPS Committee meeting per year.

4. Review of Partnership and Term of Agreement

Since the partnership is expected to be an ongoing relationship that grows and evolves, the DPS and NSBP-EPSS leadership will confer with one another annually to review the previous year’s performance and reaffirm the terms of the partnership. DPS will solicit the NSBP representatives’ inputs on the progress of the partnership and will take appropriate action to address any issues or concerns that the NSBP representatives raise.

This agreement will run for an initial term of three years from October 1, 2021 through September 30, 2024. Thereafter it will be renewed automatically for 3-year periods unless either the DPS or the NSBP gives notice to the contrary at least nine months before the end of the period that it wishes to end or amend this agreement. However, either the DPS or the NSBP may also end the agreement prior to the end of a relevant period if the other party has failed to perform any of its obligations (as described herein) after being notified of such failure and without any reasonably acceptable resolution within 45 days of such notice.

Key Leadership Points of Contact:

NSBP-EPSS Chairs (at present: [Lynnae.C.Quick@nasa.gov](mailto:Lynnae.C.Quick@nasa.gov), [alexander\_evans@brown.edu](mailto:alexander_evans@brown.edu))

DPS Chair ([DPS.Chair@aas.org](mailto:DPS.Chair@aas.org))

DPS Vice Chair ([DPS.VChair@aas.org](mailto:DPS.VChair@aas.org))

DPS Professional Culture & Climate Co-Chairs ([DPS.PCCSchair@aas.org](mailto:DPS.PCCSchair@aas.org))

DPS Treasurer ([DPS.Treasurer@aas.org](mailto:DPS.Treasurer@aas.org))

DPS Secretary ([DPS.Secretary@aas.org](mailto:DPS.Secretary@aas.org))

AAS Executive Officer (kevin.marvel@aas.org)

References

Boss, S.K., 2020. A Bill of Rights for Partnerships with Professional Organizations Serving Diverse Identities to Advance Inclusion in Geosciences. Presented at *AGU Fall Meeting*, ED016-01.

Hendrix & Rathbun 2021 Bulletin of the American Astronomical Society, Vol 3, Issue 4, e-id. 473

Rivera-Valentín et al. 2021 Bulletin of the American Astronomical Society, Vol. 53, Issue 4, e-id 443

1. <https://dps.aas.org/Inclusivity/support-underrepresented-minority-communities-planetary-science> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)