

# A YEAR OF ACTION ON DIVERSITY

BY THE ASEE DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

As indicated by the low percentage of underrepresented minorities and women among our undergraduates, engineering is not achieving diversity in academia (students, staff, and professors) or industry as fast as most desire. Moreover, even the acceptance of diversity is still an issue, as evidenced by the fall 2013 *Prism* discussion related to sexual orientation. ASEE is committed to inclusion without regard to “gender, race, ethnic background, disability, sexual orientation, gender expression, age, socioeconomic status, nationality, and other non-visible differences” such as personality, aspiration, learning style, and motivation. The society is well positioned nationally and globally to lead our profession toward the creative strength, new ideas, and innovation that come with diversity.

An ASEE Task Force on Diversity was created in 2009 with a specific charge to identify activities and systemic policies where ASEE members can actively engage. The result was the formation of the ASEE Diversity Committee. In 2011, the Board of Directors endorsed the committee’s 32 action-oriented recommendations, and this past June designated 2014-15 as an ASEE Year of Action on Diversity.

Now the real action begins. Members will discuss, engage, and highlight individual and collective activities that serve to advance the Society’s diversity efforts and inclusivity. Each coming issue of *Prism* will include a feature that describes activities, recounts experiences, and, we hope, provokes additional thought and ideas. As we progress through the year, our goal is that each individual member, institutional member, zone, region, section, division, program, council, board member, leader, and participant will be able to report at least one action taken.

As our first activity, we are calling attention to the report *Surmounting the Barriers: Ethnic Diversity in Engineering Education*, available for free download on the National Academy of Engineering website, which highlights continuing diversity impediments and provides excellent background. A tangible product of our collaboration with NAE, the report grew out of a grant to ASEE by the National Science Foundation; Bevelee Watford served as principle investigator in her then role as chair of the Diversity Committee. In addition, we are working to compile resources to be made available on the ASEE Diversity website. Please consider submitting your personal “Best of the Best” resources in diversity online at [www.aseesurveys.org/s/OnlineDiversityResources/](http://www.aseesurveys.org/s/OnlineDiversityResources/)

We hope you are already thinking about what your action will be.

To assist, we have begun a list of potential activities to achieve a dialogue and action on diversity:

- Promote the use of the Diversity Tool Kits on root causes and general diversity training materials that can be found on the ASEE Diversity website <http://www.asee.org/about-us/diversity>
- Reach out to diverse groups (both internal and external to ASEE) through contacts with zones, regions, sections, councils, and divisions, and ask each to do at least one activity focusing on diversity over the Year of Action.
- Promote position papers on particular national issues, or sponsor a group reading and discussion on newly published reports, such as “Surmounting the Barriers.”
- Promote the use of the Diversity PowerPoint presentation at meetings.
- Encourage all councils and divisions to add diversity language to their by-laws.
- Create model policies and practices documents that can be shared as promising practices through the diversity website.
- Host a diversity training event on your campus and in your zone, section, or region.
- Co-sponsor an event that is already occurring. For example, your campus might already host Positive Space or Safe Zone training.
- Host an international student celebration where cultural norms and traditions are shared.
- Recommend and promote ASEE 2015 Annual Conference keynote speakers and key sessions focused on diversity.
- Seek information on and participation of ASEE diversity divisions.
- Create a return-on-investment statement about the benefit of diversity (beyond compliance with the law).
- Highlight and leverage the practices of academic institutions that have focused on increasing diversity of faculty.

As we open students’ eyes to a profession that makes the world a better place, ASEE members should do all we can to draw as many individuals as possible into engineering and support their productivity and growth. It’s the right thing to do. Let us know of your plans and actions by emailing [diversity@asee.org](mailto:diversity@asee.org).

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