

Association of Women in Astronomy Research and Education (AWARE)

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In September 2014, the women in Astronomy are launching the Association of Women in Astronomy Research and Education (AWARE). The goal of AWARE is to bring together women in astronomy at different levels of career and education (including undergraduate students, graduate students, postdocs, research scientists/associates, lecturers, and faculty) in a mutually supportive environment in order to advance the retention, morale, and success of women in astronomy. Activities planned by AWARE include the following:

- Setting up a voluntary *pay-it-forward mentorship* system where women can offer to mentor other women at earlier career/education levels, and request to be mentored by more advanced women. The type of mentoring activities we envision include, but are not limited to, providing voluntary feedback on applications for REU programs, graduate schools, postdoctoral positions and science-related jobs; conducting mock interviews; setting up networking opportunities; and providing leadership/communication training.
- Educating both women and men on issues of explicit and implicit gender bias, attribution bias, and evaluation bias so that they can ‘correct’ for it and adopt best practices when serving on admission and search committees. One example activity will be for everyone to take the implicit bias in science test at <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/> to gauge his/her own level of prejudices.
- Engaging both men and women in exploring and addressing the problems leading to a continued under-representation of women across all STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields. Reasons often cited include explicit and implicit gender bias, attribution bias, lack of family-friendly policies, clash of tenure clock with biological clock, the selectivity hypothesis (critical mass), the under-appreciation hypothesis (Urry 2012), decades of social conditioning and cultural stereotyping (e.g., Bennett, 1996, 1997; Kirkcaldy et al., 2007, Tiedeman, 2000), and the recently proposed field’s ability belief (FAB; Leslie, Bian , & Meyer 2014). AWARE plans to discuss findings from scientific and social science research and filter these through our own ‘astronomical’ lenses. We will also have invited speakers on these issues. Planned speakers for this year include Drs. Meg Urry and David Charbonneau.
- Participating in national conferences such as the Conference for Undergraduate Women in Physics or the AAS Special Sessions on diversity and gender equity.
- Providing a network for women to voluntarily help each other and share resources related to family/work balance. We will also continue to work with CNS-level representatives to promote improved graduate parent academic accommodation policy and possible paid leaves. These are important issues as reports show that family formation accounts for the largest leaks in the pipeline between the receipt of the PhD and the acquisition of tenure for women in the sciences (e.g., Charbonneau et al. 2013; Mason, Goulden, & Frasch 2011).
- Providing a supportive environment where all members of AWARE, particularly younger members can seek help on sensitive issues, such as academic difficulties, sexual harassment/misconduct, etc. CNS official policies on sexual harassment/misconduct will be provided to members.

- Informal get-togethers, such as lunches and one annual potluck dinner. (These will be paid for by the attendees and no Cox funds are requested)
- Meeting informally with colloquium speakers, where appropriate, to discuss family/balance issues (e.g., 2 body problems) and gender equity.

In accordance with the collaborative communal vision of AWARE, investigators on this proposal include women in Astronomy at different levels of career and education, including Shardha Jogee and Harriet Dinerstein (Faculty), Keely Finkelstein and Sarah Tuttle (Lecturer/Research Associates), Rachael Livermore (Postdoc), Emma Yu (Graduate student) and Rebecca Larson (Undergraduate Student).

We request \$1,500 from the Cox funds to fund the following: (1) Part of the travel, lodging, and meal costs of external speakers. We expect two to three external speakers per year. When appropriate, we plan to combine their visits with a Tuesday colloquium and ask them to stay one extra day to give the Wednesday Cosmos seminar on gender diversity and equity. Planned speakers for this year include Drs. Meg Urry and David Charbonneau; (2) The dinner bills for students and postdocs who attend one dinner or lunch with each speaker. Faculty, lecturers, and research scientists will cover their own expenses.