

Northwestern University, The Graduate School - Student Life and Multicultural Affairs

## Message from the Chair

- SECMA -

Science and Engineering  
Committee on Multicultural  
Affairs

- AGEP -

Alliance for Graduate Educa-  
tion and the Professoriate

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Dear SECMA Members:

Thirty members attended the SECMA breakfast on April 11, 2008, and the SECMA Executive Committee appreciates your participation!

Provost Dan Linzer was our featured speaker, and he shared his insights and historical perspective of recruiting underrepresented students into STEM programs at Northwestern University. We also had a panel that included two students and three faculty members as they shared their insights into best practices in underrepresented minority student recruitment. Margarita Dubocovich was also recognized for her years of service as SECMA chair. Mario Craigen updated all of us on the SROP students who will be with us in the summer of 2008.

April 15<sup>th</sup> has passed, and we now know who will matriculate in our pro-

grams. However, recruiting underrepresented students is an ongoing process, and all of us need to continually look for opportunities to discover students and to personally work with them until they apply for admission and hopefully matriculate at Northwestern University. SROP, REU's at Northwestern, and involvement with the SROP and School Visit Subcommittees are all ways that each of us can help in the recruitment process. To help identify and track communication with potential applicants, The Graduate School now has an Apply-Yourself prospect tool. McCormick is now using the tool, and other programs should consider using it. I will be pleased to demonstrate its use to interested SECMA members.

I trust that the subcommittees will be active and that each of you will be an active member as we all work together to recruit, matriculate, and graduate



Bruce Lindvall, Ph.D.

underrepresented minority students in our graduate programs.

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or ideas for us to become an even more effective organization.

Sincerely,

Bruce A. Lindvall, PhD  
Chair, SECMA

## Mega Midwest AGEP Conference 2008

The first Mega Midwest AGEP (Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate) Conference was a collaborative effort of five Midwest AGEP alliances representing 18 universities led by Northwestern University and the University of Michigan. AGEP Graduate students came together for 3 days of professional development and networking. Graduate stu-



Northwestern AGEP Students in purple at the 2008 Mega Midwest AGEP Conference.

dents at all stages of study, whether first year or about to graduate, were able to choose between a wide variety of workshops and presentations while interacting with peers from across the Midwest. Special student workshops were developed to better identify and more effectively address the needs and concerns of our next generation of young scholars. Cheryl Judice, PhD., Northwestern AGEP Director, as well as Northwestern AGEP students Melvin Daniels and recent graduate Kathleen Somera-Molina, PhD. were workshop presenters.

### Northwestern Panels:

#### Diversity Matters in the Classroom, Cheryl Judice, PhD

This interactive workshop on diversity matters in the classroom was designed to raise awareness of issues faculty in the 21st century will face as American institutions of higher education become more culturally diverse.

#### Words of Wisdom: How to Thrive in Graduate School

Melvin Daniels, Kathleen Somera-Molina, PhD, Norman Atkins, Jr & Brandon Cassimere

A panel of 3-4 advanced students sharing words of wisdom, tips, strategies, and resources that they found to help them through being admitted to candidacy and passing the qualifying exam.



At left: AGEP Scholar Melvin Daniels registers at the Mega Midwest Conference.



AGEP Scholar Oscar Curet (at right) with fellow Mega Conference participants.



## Thanks to AGEP Funds...

AGEP provides funds to affiliated graduate students to attend conferences and conduct research. Students share how these experiences impacted their research and helped prepare them for the job search.

**Rodney Priestley**, recent PhD recipient in Chemical and Biological Engineering attended The Compact Institute for Faculty Diversity Conference (CIFDC) this past October in Washington D.C. with the support of AGEP.

“As a senior graduate student entering the academic job market in November 2007, attending the meeting in October was especially nice for me. I gained

valuable insight into how to present a proposed research talk and how to present a departmental seminar; both of which I have subsequently done during academic interviews. Thus, from a practical standpoint attending CIFDC was great for me. In addition, I later accepted an interview at a school in which my first personal contact with any member of faculty occurred at CIFDC. I have no doubt that this contact aided in my obtaining an interview at this particular school. Thus, from a networking standpoint, the conference was great for me. All in all, the conference was very useful and I thank AGEP for the support to have attended the meeting.”

-Rodney Priestley

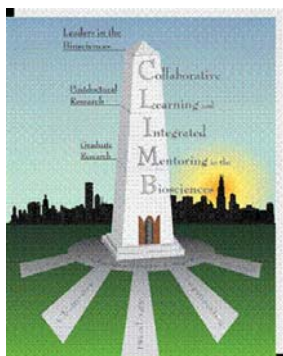


Rodney Priestley, Ph.D.

At the 2008 American Physical Society Meeting, Rodney won the most prestigious award for Ph.D. students working in the field of polymer physics, the Padden Award for Excellence in Polymer Physics Research. Rodney has received eight offers for faculty positions in Chemical

Engineering from schools including Rice, UC Davis, Cornell and Princeton. Rodney intends to begin his career as a professor at Princeton University in Fall 2010 after completing an 18-month post-doctoral position in Paris where he will work with Professor Ludwik Leibler.

## Second Steps for the CLIMB Program in 2008



The CLIMB (Collaborative Learning and Integrated Mentoring in the Biosciences) Program is moving forward into its second year at Northwestern University. The current CLIMB Scholars and Associate Scholars assisted in the recruitment of incoming graduate students by preparing a PowerPoint presentation and poster that were used to recruit prospective students when visiting the university and their respective programs.

More than 90 applicants to all five of our life science programs (BME, ChBE, IBIS, IGP, and NUIN) were considered, 26 applicants were interviewed by phone or in person during recruiting visits, and 14 appli-

cants were extended offers as CLIMB Scholars or Associate Scholars. At the close of the recruitment season, eight applicants have accepted our offers into The CLIMB Program.

Among the enrolled students, Kyle Laster has work for almost three years in the laboratory of Dr. Ernest Moore at Northwestern and participated in the SROP program in 2006. Desmond Henderson came from Tougaloo College in the summer of 2007 with funding by the Jackson Heart Program and FASEB-MARC to work in Professor Dubocovich's Laboratory. Frank Aguilar and Antonia Navarro participated in the Post-Baccalaureate Research Education Program at the University of Chicago, and will be starting in the IGP program this summer. Ruth Quintana, who is coming from the University of Puerto Rico, initially heard about CLIMB during a recruiting trip made by Professor John Disterhoft. Diana Monsivais will complete the Bridge to the Doctorate Program with her master's degree at Chicago State University before starting in IGP. Rebecca Melissa Rodriguez is a first generation college student

and participated in the MBRS-RISE program while at the University of Texas at San Antonio. Leidamarie Tirado comes from Clemson University with her BS degree in biochemistry, which she finished in four years while working at least 20 hours per week to pay for her college expenses completely on her own. All of these students have dramatic stories in how they've overcome obstacles to achieve their academic successes. We hope that you'll have opportunities to meet them personally and learn more of their continuing achievements.

*"All of these students have dramatic stories in how they've overcome obstacles to achieve their academic successes."*

The current CLIMB students are making positive progress in

their coursework and research. In addition to their normal research and course requirements, the students participated in the Research Communication Workshops (RCWs) in which they discussed and presented their research. During the winter quarter, the RCWs were peer-facilitated by AGEP Scholars, Kristen Mighty and D'Anne Duncan. They were also supervised by the CLIMB Assistant Director, Steve Lee, while Professor Margarita Dubocovich oversaw the entire program as the Program Director.

As we anticipate new challenges from working with two classes of students, we will draw upon our experiences from the first year. We are looking forward to continuing to work with the current CLIMB students and helping the next class of students begin their graduate careers in the summer and fall of 2008.

## Congratulations to Cynthia Pierre



Cynthia Pierre

Cynthia Pierre, PhD Candidate in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering, and long-time active AGEP scholar, received an AAUW (American Association of

University Women) Selected Professions Dissertation Fellowship for 2008-2009. This award provides \$20,000 for the final year of study for the PhD.

Cynthia also received \$3,000 in AGEP funds toward the purchase of a camera for the Optical Microscopy Lab at NU under the direction of Prof. Kathleen Stair. The total cost of the camera was \$18,841. Shared Facilities and Facility funds from Prof. Stair helped to cover the

remaining costs. This camera is an important asset to Cynthia's research and teaching as well as that of others in the MSE and Chemistry departments.

## Recruitment Update

Several faculty volunteers from Life Sciences and Engineering gave academic lectures and spoke with underrepresented minority students at schools across the country. This is part of SECMA's effort to encourage students to pursue graduate studies and to highlight the various programs at NU that support the retention of minority students in PhD programs.

SECMA's 2008 recruitment trips are as follows:

**Rick Silverman**, Chemistry, visited the University of Texas at San Antonio on March 3.

"The connection to their faculty and their McNair program will provide further points of contact in the future."

*Robert Linsenmeier*

**Robert Linsenmeier**, Engineering, and graduate student **Shanti Frausto** visited the University of New Mexico on March 26.

**Erwin Goldberg**, Biology, visited the University of Texas at San Antonio on April 4.

**Robert Holmgren**, IBIS, visited the University of Maryland, Baltimore County on April 14.



Rooftop view of Northwestern University



**NORTHWESTERN  
UNIVERSITY**

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**SECMA**, the Science and Engineering Committee on Multicultural Affairs, is composed of Northwestern faculty members, administrators, and graduate students. SECMA's mission is to recruit and retain a more diverse student population in Science and Engineering graduate programs.

**Chair:** Bruce A. Lindvall, Ph.D.

**Co-Chair:** Robert Holmgren, Ph.D.

The **Midwest Crossroads AGEP** is one of 22 programs nationwide funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF). The primary goal of AGEP is to increase the number of underrepresented minorities receiving doctoral degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM fields).

**PI:** Lawrence Henschen, Ph.D.

**Director:** Cheryl Judice, Ph.D.

*For more information about SECMA or AGEP activities, contact Cheryl Judice, at c-judice@northwestern.edu.*