

Report from the Site Visit to Brookhaven National Laboratory (BNL) Nuclear and Particle Physics Directorate (NPP)

Organized by the
Committee on the Status of Women in Physics
Of the American Physical Society
September 23-24, 2019

Recommendations for NPP (*ALD responses in italics*)

Bold, numbered items are the seven recommendations from the Site Visit. They are stated here, because each one applies to more than one of the topics covered in this report. Beneath each recommendation we provide a few specific suggestions, not as a checklist, but for consideration. Most of the suggestions originated with one or more NPP members, through the APS climate survey, or in their meetings or email communications with us.

1. Share this report with all members of NPP and follow up within about 3 months with a written summary of actions taken or planned that apply to or respond to each recommendation.

- Organize frequent open communications events or other channels between (i.e., 2-way) management and scientific, technical, and administrative employees (e.g., an open forum where management will respond to any question raised by employees, publish, or discuss the key points discussed at Lab Director's meetings or meetings of the ALDs with lab management).

Actions Taken:

- Started a weekly NPP Update newsletter.
- Installed comment/suggestion boxes in the lobbies of B510, B902, B911 and online anonymous suggestion option on the I&D Website.
- Established an email address for staff comments.
- Council provided verbal update at All-Hands meeting on March 3, 2021.
- Council scheduled first open meeting. Plan to host on a quarterly basis.

For future consideration:

- Provide additional time for Q&A at All-Hands meetings. Follow up on questions not answered in NPP Weekly Update or recorded response.
- Host a town hall.

2. Document, track, measure, and share progress toward implementation of the *Inclusion and Diversity Plan* and the recommendations from this and previous climate site visits.

- Develop a centralized mechanism by which, to document and make broadly available the recommendations and major comments from the site visits, surveys, and other Lab initiatives for recruiting and retaining underrepresented groups.

Actions Taken:

- NPP webpage has a section dedicated to diversity, equity, and inclusion that contains relevant information.
- Council has added meeting agendas to website.
- Status update of APS Site Visit Recommendations posted on website.

For future consideration:

- Post progress reports on a quarterly basis (minutes after open meetings).
- Develop a plan on how to address the recommendations that is aligned with the vision and the agenda of the NPP directorate and the Laboratory with the corresponding short- and long-term milestones.
 - We intend to develop a NPP I&D Plan in parallel to the Lab-wide DE&I Plan. Recently met with Joseph Lee from DEI office to discuss. DEI
- Develop mechanisms to track, evaluate and measure success of a solution put in place and procedures to revise the plans as needed.
 - TBD
- Develop and communicate clear expectations and mechanisms for accountability at all levels.
 - Everyone will need to include a Diversity Goal among the FY 2020 goals that will be evaluated in the annual performance assessment; there is now a training of Performance Goal Setting for employees.
- Communicate racial/ethnic/gender demographic data for NPP annually to staff, overall on hires and other parameters
 - TBD
- When communicating data on progress in improving demographic diversity, include information on the available pool to build awareness among employees and acknowledging management's attention to the issues. For example, include fraction of women hired into each level and how this compares to the available pool (in physics, women make up 20% of the graduating PhDs, and comparing the new hire rate of women to this number will be telling, while the fraction of women who are graduating with AA degrees from technical colleges might be substantially less, and should inform perceived progress in job classifications requiring this credential).
- Provide statistics on incidents of inappropriate behavior and consequences, when possible, to demonstrate that actions are being taken.

- Annually review initiatives that work toward a more inclusive and transparent culture. Publicly discuss how the initiatives are evolving and their impact, including on hiring and promotion.
 - Plan to create hiring guidelines. Pending further discussion.
 - Give credit to employees in performance evaluations for service on important committees, such as for inclusivity and diversity, and for outreach and other efforts peripheral to their positions.
 - Performance evaluation should reflect this.
- 3. Drive culture change to create an environment that is welcoming to; supportive of; and accelerates recruitment, retention, career-pathways for, and advancement of women and individuals from underrepresented groups, especially in scientific, technical, and management positions.**
- Communicate to everyone in the directorate why climate issues are important and how a welcoming and mutually supportive environment will help NPP recruit and retain the best women and people from underrepresented groups, contributing to the success of NPP.
 - Done at multiple levels in All Hands and Group Leader meetings.
 - Revise all organization charts to spell out the first names, which subtly sends the message that box occupants are people with valued and diverse identities.
 - Done for all org charts in NPP.
 - Educate all employees on topics including, but not limited to, sexual harassment, discrimination policies, effective and culturally attuned mentoring, and procedures for reporting issues.
 - BNL just rolled out a new harassment training course everyone must take.
 - BNL has policies in place for Respectful Workplace, Anti-Harassment, Anti-Retaliation, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action.
 - BNL has multiple avenues to report issues: Employee Concerns Program, Brookhaven Advocacy Council, HR, line management, new third-party vendor Ethics Point.
 - Share the Lab's and directorate's *Diversity and Inclusion Plan* with employees, including information on how the plan is being implemented and any metrics to be watched to judge progress and success.
 - The 2021 BNL Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan is under development. Will follow this up by development of a NPP Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan.
 - Accelerate recruitment of, improve retention of, communicate career pathways for, and promote advancement of women and underrepresented minorities within NPP.

- Career pathways are defined by HR and should be discussed between supervisor and employees.
 - Hiring guidelines pending.
 - Whenever a review or assessment important to many employees is conducted, promptly share with employees the results of the review/assessment along with plans to address findings and recommendations.
 - Culture change specialist hired. Additional work needed within directorate.
 - Management at all levels must be vocal and clear that there is zero tolerance for inappropriate behaviors that undermine inclusivity and diversity. Ensure that issues/complaints ARE investigated AND addressed promptly, and “close the loop” with affected employees.
 - Provide more opportunities for people at different levels, in different positions (e.g. management, engineers, physicists, technicians, and staff), from different backgrounds and cultures, and in different groups to interact with each other.
 - Employee Resource Groups.
 - BERA social activities and programs.
 - Currently difficult under current COVID-19 pandemic circumstances.
 - Consider diversity when developing career pathways and “succession plans.”
 - Consider including new and early-career employees on important committees, so that they may interact with more senior and experienced individuals, and so that these committees can benefit from their ideas and perspectives.
 - Involve everyone, including white males and individuals with power/stature, in shaping the climate, and hold them accountable for valuing and implementing inclusiveness.
 - The DE&I goal required for all BNL employees is a step in this direction.
 - Many white males in leadership positions sit on the DE&I council.
 - Consider re-establishing the ombudsperson position or one similarly independent and empowered and consider developing a public FAQ to outline issues (e.g., standards of ethical behavior).
 - Agreement by senior Lab management for such an appointment was recently obtained. A qualified person will need to be recruited.
 - A peer counselor program was established by NPP I&D Council with seven trained peer counselors.
- 4. Strongly encourage BNL to solve the infrastructure barriers to positive work/life balance, such as convenient childcare, transportation, informal networking venues, conveniently located lactation rooms, partner-hiring approaches, and other necessities of life for staff and for visitors. If these solutions are part of the Discovery Park, don't delay their**

implementation until that vision is realized, but provide “stop-gap” solutions as soon as possible.

- Consider establishing an early-career advocacy group to help prioritize the needs and actions so that solutions support work-life balance of early-career employees, who are generally in positions with limited voice.
 - [The lab has an Early Career Resource Group that addresses this.](#)
- Visibly support and assist employees who could be adversely affected by new government requirements, such as the recent conflict-of-interest declarations and visa issues.
 - [The new Deputy DCOO will interact with the Office of International Services on all visa related issues and staff on assignments in foreign country.](#)

5. Develop effective training opportunities within a coherent professional development program to help drive the culture change toward full inclusivity and diversity.

- Include frequent, meaningful, engaging, and interactive training on sexual harassment, explicit and implicit bias, micro-aggression, cultural humility, cross-cultural communication, front-stander strategies and expectations (to overcome bystander/observer tendencies), and mentoring, among other topics.
 - [A lab-wide training module on sexual harassment was rolled out in 2020.](#)
 - [Video clips explaining implicit bias, etc., shown and discussed in All Hands meetings and in directorate management meetings.](#)
 - [Council planned interactive workshop, *50 Ways to Fight Bias*.](#)
- Some mandatory training is likely needed, but the content and delivery mode of all sessions, especially mandatory sessions, must be effective and meaningful (not rote compliance).
 - [The DE&I Office is working with an external consultant to develop a customized training program. Also looking to expand the mandatory DEI training catalogue.](#)
- Evaluate the training and include mechanisms to improve it to serve NPP and employee needs and catalyze the desired climate improvements.
- Resources from NSF ADVANCE (see Appendix 5 for an example) and other sources outside BNL and the DOE National Laboratory system would be valuable to consult.

6. Strengthen the partnership between HR and NPP.

- Make it a standard practice to consult with NPP to obtain meaningful input for the job descriptions, required and preferred qualifications, members of search committees, and

hiring decisions for any Human Resources Department (HR) personnel to be deployed to the Directorate.

- NPP HRM and team are aware of and work with hiring managers to write job descriptions to attract multiple types of candidates.
 - HR recently asked for volunteers from directorate DE&I councils to serve on search and interview committees.
 - The HR Department should develop a strategy for actively understanding the needs and concerns of hiring managers and bring hiring managers together across different levels of employees to ensure that broader conversations occur regarding capabilities, policies, and success metrics in hiring and administrative actions (disciplinary, retention, etc.).
 - HRM comes to the Group Leaders meeting to discuss the HR related issues, and plans to meet with the hiring managers (group leaders) individually to better understand the needs and convey the policies.
 - Ensure HR processes with respect to promotion, discipline, and other matters affecting all employees are transparent, well communicated, and well understood across all job categories and units.
 - Committees for scientific appointments and promotions are set up at department level.
 - Announcement for regular promotions and salary adjustments is made at year end to all the supervisors.
 - The NPP HRM will be invited to explain policies, including performance appraisal and other policies at All Hands meetings.
 - Encourage BNL to decouple compliance and enforcement responsibilities from the Diversity Office and expand its incentives and resources for catalyzing inclusion, diversity, and culture change.
 - New Chief Diversity Officer will report directly to Doon Gibbs.
 - Provide support for international employees dealing with visa issues or affected by requirements that cause them to feel unwelcome.
 - New Deputy DCOO will be engaged in handling the visa related issues with Office of International Services.
- 7. Provide opportunities for employees, especially junior employees, to be mentored by multiple individuals, including from within and outside their workgroup, and provide training in cultural humility and effective mentoring skills across cultural, demographic, and national lines.**
- Provide effective mentorship to junior employees on pathways to promotion.

- This depends on our ability to identify mentors. Currently, our cohort of mentors is deplorably small. Action: Identify suitable incentives.
 - HR in the process of revamping the mentoring program.
- Require employees in supervisory roles to be trained in effective mentoring so that they can serve as mentors to junior members and enable the transfer of knowledge, skills, and organization culture.
 - Encourage supervisors to take LOSA training.
 - Supervisors are being asked to discuss their plan for junior staff career paths with management during the annual performance appraisal process.
- Make efforts to ensure that promotion criteria and any rules for evaluating performance are transparent, understood by all employees, and implemented uniformly.
 - Generally, performance and promotion reviews are implemented uniformly due to departmental calibration.
 - New performance appraisal scale: HR to analyze ratings by directorate, job classification, gender, and ethnicity. Analysis will inform guidelines for FY22 cycle and identify areas where to increase training to mitigate bias if necessary. HR will also analyze promotion rates over 5 years by gender, ethnicity, and job classification.
- Consider including methods to enhance awareness of and acceptance of gender roles and identity preferences.