

Strength in Diversity

ON INAUGURATION DAY 2005, the TOS Council, the governing board of The Oceanography Society, held its Annual Meeting by teleconference. Council members dialed in from five different time zones. This was not a statement of the unwillingness of Council members to travel for another meeting, but a demonstration of their willingness to take time wherever they were to participate in the governance of the Society. As part of my President's report to the meeting, I was pleased to be able to discuss some of the accomplishments and milestones from the past year: a seamless transition of *Oceanography* magazine editors from Rick Spinrad and Liz Tirpak to Ellen Kappel and Nancy Caputo and a highly successful TOS/ASLO Ocean Research Conference in February 2004 in Honolulu that set a foundation for intensive and successful negotiations for a MOU among AGU, ASLO, and TOS to hold joint Ocean Science Meetings in 2006, 2008, and beyond. The year in review also saw the launch of the TOS Fellows program and the redesign and launch of new TOS web pages. Initial planning and launch of the June 2005 TOS International Ocean Research Conference in Paris commenced, TOS Council elections were held, and TOS's financial footing improved. Many of these accomplishments were the result of hard work and dedication of Jenny Ramarui and Ellen Kappel—two of the Society's leading women.

This issue of *Oceanography* celebrates contributions of women to ocean science. You'll notice that it covers a wide range of subjects and types of contributions, and that the autobiographical profiles include women in a variety of jobs and careers that are related to ocean sciences. One common thread in many of these stories is the presence of someone who provided guidance at critical times in their careers. It is important that we, as individuals and as a professional society, recognize the significance of this support and seek to mentor the next generation of women scientists in the hope of retaining more of them within the oceanographic community.

In December 2004, the Association for Women Geoscientists published a workshop report entitled, *Where are the Women Geoscience Professors?* (www.awg.org). It provides a comprehensive set of data on the status of women in the geosciences, including oceanography, describes successful strategies for increasing gender diversity, and addresses obstacles that hinder career development for women. The report underscores peer-mentoring networks and role models as highly effective strategies for increasing gender diversity. The oceanographic community needs to continue to expand these types of activities—both formally and informally. A diverse workforce is critical for responding to the needs of society with solutions that are based on high-quality basic research and an awareness of the cultural issues that influence human actions.

Despite our community's improvement in attracting greater numbers of women during the past decade, there is room for increased diversity. According to data in the workshop report, women make up less than 20 percent of the geoscience academic workforce. Within academia, the percentage of women in faculty positions falls with increasing rank, and many women are employed in part time or other non-tenure track positions. Data in 2003 show that more than 60 geoscience Ph.D.-granting institutions in the United States had no women on their faculty, and over half of the remaining geosciences institutions had only one. The importance of role models and mentors is well documented, and more of them are needed for our community to continue to diversify its ranks.

Much has been written about effective mentoring. A Google search brings up a plethora of practical guides for mentoring, web sites of formal and informal university organizations dedicated to mentoring, plus an array of references and resources. Can and should a relatively small professional society like TOS with limited resources be an advocate for increasing gender and other forms of diversity in oceanography? Absolutely. TOS has and will continue to encourage student involvement at all its meetings to provide a forum for mentoring and role modeling, especially since many TOS members are in positions to be diversity advocates and mentors. In addition, TOS will continue to participate in the Minorities Striving and Pursuing Higher Degrees of Success in Earth System Science (MS PHD'S) initiative (more information is available at <http://msphds.usf.edu/>).

This issue is designed to highlight the contributions of women to our field and to initiate discussion about the best ways to increase gender diversity at all levels of our profession, but particularly among tenured faculty. TOS recognizes and reports on the disciplinary diversity of oceanography—from biology to physics to geology to resource management. It follows then that being advocates for gender and other forms of diversity strengthens oceanography intellectually and better prepares our profession to respond to the diverse social and economic needs of our global society.



LARRY CLARK, TOS PRESIDENT