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COMMENT

Embracing the glorious diversity of ACS

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In her final remarks as first lady, Michelle Obama said, “Our glorious diversity—our diversities of faiths and colors and creeds—that is not a threat to who we are; it makes us who we are.”

The American Chemical Society has a varied and diverse membership, and when we embrace this diversity and conscientiously include all chemists and ACS members in the chemical enterprise, we make the whole chemical enterprise stronger. This quotation from Obama calls out faiths, colors, and creeds, but there are many other facets of diversity as well, such as gender.

The ACS Women Chemists Committee (WCC) is focused on gender inclusion, but when we work toward a more inclusive environment for women, we create a more inclusive environment overall.

WCC’s vision is “Empowering women throughout the chemical enterprise.” However, our mission is even more inclusive: “to attract, retain, develop, promote, and advocate for women to positively impact diversity, equity and inclusion in the Society and the profession.”

WCC has four goals and several strategies to achieve this mission.

► **Goal 1:** Increase engagement and retention of women chemists. WCC continues to use face-to-face events at national meetings, such as the Women Chemists of Color Networking event, the Women in the Chemical Enterprise breakfast, and the WCC Just Cocktails reception, as places and



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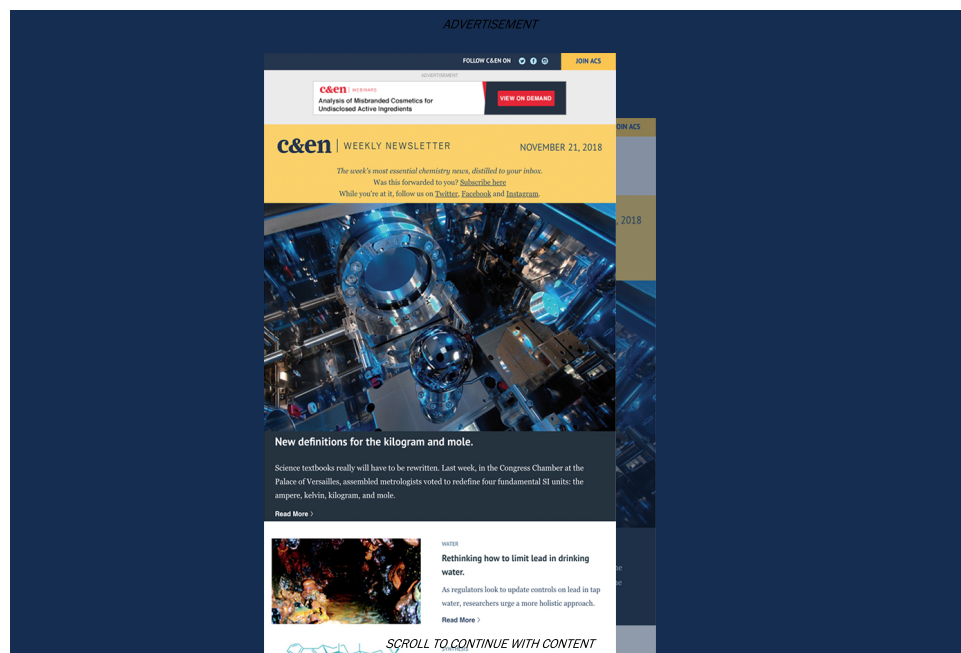
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spaces for chemists to network with women chemists. WCC is also using social media to engage those who cannot meet face to face. Follow us on Twitter [@AcsWcc](#), or look for us on Facebook [@acsnationalwcc](#). We will also launch a new ACS WCC website this summer.

“What can each of us do to advance inclusion and improve the climate for women and chemists from underrepresented backgrounds?”

► **Goal 2:** Within the society, advocate and educate on issues of importance to women chemists. We have several WCC project teams advocating for nominations of women for national technical awards, fair treatment of non-tenure-track faculty, awareness and prevention of sexual harassment, and information and best practices for the safety of pregnant and nursing mothers in the laboratory. Many of these advocacy teams depend on relationships between WCC and other committees or divisions within ACS.

► **Goal 3:** Enhance leadership and career development opportunities for women chemists. In addition to the symposia provided at national meetings, WCC collaborated last spring with ACS Webinars to produce a program, “Advocating for Yourself: Stop Looking for Yoda to Advance Your Career,” specifically tailored to the needs of women. WCC hopes to use the webinars and regional meetings to engage more women chemists.



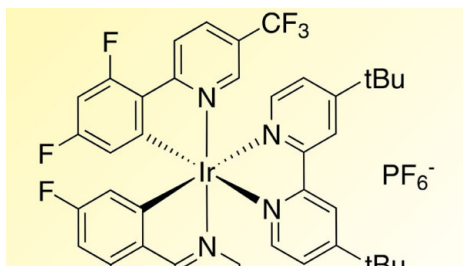
► **Goal 4:** Highlight and recognize the accomplishments of women chemists. This goal is accomplished largely through the WCC awards programs. This year marks the 30th anniversary of the **WCC/Eli Lilly Travel Award**. With the generous support of Eli Lilly and Company, WCC gives out 10 awards at each national meeting to outstanding emerging scientists who will present their research at the meeting. In the 30-year history of this award, the program has supported more than

700 researchers. The collection of past winners is impressive and includes researchers who have gone on to careers as CEOs, company founders, senior researchers, senior scientists, professors, and administrators.

At the ACS national meeting in San Diego in August, we will be celebrating this milestone anniversary with a half-day symposium featuring a selection of past winners of the WCC/Eli Lilly and Company award. Additionally, the WCC Just Cocktails event will celebrate the continuous support of Lilly.

Also in San Diego, WCC will feature Frances H. Arnold, a 2018 Nobel laureate in chemistry, as the keynote speaker for the WCC luncheon. WCC is overjoyed to recognize the first American woman to win the Nobel Prize in Chemistry.

What can each of us do to advance inclusion and improve the climate for women and chemists from underrepresented backgrounds? Recognize the accomplishments of these chemists publicly. While we must avoid concluding that the success of a few examples represents the end of the systematic challenges faced, we can take these recognitions as signs of progress. We must also be intentionally inclusive in selecting candidates for awards and professional positions. We cannot rely on informal networking to yield a diverse group of authors, panelists, contributors, or committee members. We must intentionally seek out participants whose views and experiences differ from our own.



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One growing resource for people who are interested in conscientious inclusion is **Diversify Chemistry**. To help diversify your participant pools, search the Diversify Chemistry website, where academic chemists have self-identified as being from an underrepresented or disadvantaged group.

Finally, if you are a chemist who is interested in supporting and advocating for women chemists, find out if your local section has a WCC. Email us at wcc@acs.org, and don't forget to follow WCC on social media to stay informed about our upcoming events.

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