

15 September 2020

Optics and Photonics Luminaries Honored with the 2020 OSA Diversity and Inclusion Advocacy Recognition

Individual and organizational recognition of efforts to increase diversity and inclusivity in science

WASHINGTON – The Optical Society ([OSA](#)) is pleased to announce the winners of the 2020 OSA Diversity and Inclusion Advocacy Recognition – Arti Agrawal, associate professor of engineering and IT, University of Technology Sydney, Australia; Jennifer Burris, chair of the department of physics and astronomy, Appalachian State University, USA; and the Department of Physics, St. Mary’s College of Maryland, USA.

The recognition honors the steadfast commitment and achievements of OSA members, companies or institutions that proactively work to create a more diverse, equitable and inclusive optics and photonics community.

The scientific community benefits from the engagement of diverse voices to enhance scientific research and application. This recognition serves to acknowledge efforts of individuals and institutions who uphold these same values through community service, professional development, mentoring, trainings and resources.

“The recipients of this recognition work tirelessly to ensure that the search for scientific discovery is informed by diverse perspectives and experiences,” said OSA CEO Elizabeth Rogan. “We should all be inspired by the accomplishments of these honorees who embody OSA’s core value of inclusivity by prioritizing diversity in optics and photonics.”

The Diversity and Inclusion Advocacy Recognition was presented, 15 September 2020 during the all-virtual 2020 Frontiers in Optics + Laser Science APS/DLS ([FiO + LS](#)) Conference

Recognition of Arti Agrawal

Arti Agrawal is recognized “for her unwavering dedication to promoting diversity and inclusion throughout the global optics and photonics community.”

Throughout her career, Arti has championed for women, the LGBTQIA+ community, and underdeveloped and underrepresented communities in STEM. As an OSA Board Member, Arti was pivotal in establishing key target metrics across the Society to help achieve greater gender parity. The selection committee was particularly impressed with her work at her home institution and professional societies to ensure that all barriers to entry and success in STEM are removed.

Recognition of Jennifer Burris

Jennifer Burris is recognized “for facilitating systemic changes that have improved diversity and inclusion for her department, university and community.”

Jennifer serves as Appalachian State University’s first woman Chair of the Department of Physics and Astronomy. She continuously uses this role to foster a more diverse and inclusive student body and faculty. Notably, she has secured funding to help promote a diverse campus environment through the National Science Foundation (NSF) ADVANCE grant for campus-wide anti-bias training, resources, and advocacy efforts.

Recognition of the Department of Physics, St. Mary's College of Maryland

The Department of Physics at St. Mary's College of Maryland is acknowledged "for making long-term changes that improve diversity, equity and inclusion in its operations and culture."

The selection committee was enthusiastic about the Department's commitment to ensuring that all members of its physics and entire STEM community feel welcomed and are able to thrive. St. Mary's College of Maryland's Physics Department has achieved gender parity amongst its staff and student population. The Department reinforces these key values by including diversity and inclusion workshops and seminars as part of the first-year curriculum.

Learn more about the [2020 OSA Diversity & Inclusion Advocacy Recognition Winners](#). For questions, contact diversity@osa.org.

About The Optical Society

Founded in 1916, The Optical Society (OSA) is the leading professional organization for scientists, engineers, students and business leaders who fuel discoveries, shape real-life applications and accelerate achievements in the science of light. Through world-renowned publications, meetings and membership initiatives, OSA provides quality research, inspired interactions and dedicated resources for its extensive global network of optics and photonics experts. For more information, visit osa.org.

Media Contact

mediarelations@osa.org