

15 June 2020

Science Professional Societies Announce 2020-21 Congressional Science and Engineering Fellows

The Optical Society, Materials Research Society and SPIE select Congressional Fellows poised to learn and contribute to U.S. science policymaking

WASHINGTON – The Optical Society (OSA), the Materials Research Society (MRS) and SPIE, the international society for optics and photonics, are pleased to announce the selection of Catherine Clark and Michelle Solomon as 2020-2021 Congressional Science and Engineering Fellows. Each will serve a one-year term in Washington, D.C., USA, as a special legislative assistant for a member of the U.S. Congress or as a staff member for a congressional committee.

Clark will serve as the 2020-2021 [OSA/MRS Congressional Fellow](#), while Solomon will serve as the 2020-2021 [Arthur H. Guenther Congressional Fellow](#), which is co-sponsored by OSA and SPIE. The two Fellows will begin their terms in September 2020.

“I am thrilled to have this opportunity to experience policymaking firsthand,” Clark said. “I hope to apply my background in energy technologies towards effective, equitable, and science-based climate and energy policy.”

“I am thrilled to have been selected as the Arthur H. Guenther Congressional Fellow, and I look forward to applying science-driven thinking in service to the public while learning about policymaking and the legislative process,” Solomon said.

As part of their Fellowship, Clark and Solomon will attend a comprehensive science policy and communication training and orientation session facilitated by the American Association of the Advancement of Science ([AAAS](#)). Upon training completion, the Fellows will interview with Senate, House of Representatives and congressional committee staff on Capitol Hill and then select which congressional office or committee they wish to serve for their fellowship year.

The Congressional Fellowship’s program mission is to bring technical and scientific backgrounds and perspectives to the decision-making process in Congress and provide scientists with insight into the inner workings of the federal government. Fellows have the opportunity to participate in a multitude of policymaking functions including, conducting legislative or oversight work, assist in congressional hearings and debates, prepare policy briefs and write speeches.

Each year, following a formal application process, finalists are interviewed and Congressional Fellows are selected by a committee comprised of volunteer members from OSA, MRS and SPIE. For more information on the selection process and fellowship criteria, visit the [OSA](#), [MRS](#) or [SPIE](#) websites.

OSA/MRS Congressional Fellow:

Catherine Clark is currently finishing her Ph.D in Materials Science at the University of Minnesota, USA. Her research is in the area of metal halide perovskite materials for optoelectronics, focusing on the development a solvent-free deposition method to enable the study of process-structure-property relationships in lead-free perovskite materials. Prior to graduate school, Catherine worked at Siemens Energy as a mechanical engineer on wind turbines, gas turbines, and generators. She holds a BSE in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering from Princeton University, USA.

At the University of Minnesota, Catherine has served on several graduate student councils that work to improve graduate student life by building community, raising awareness around issues facing graduate students, and implementing policies to improve relationships between students and faculty. Catherine has also been involved in grassroots fundraising through Headwaters Foundation's Giving Project, which supports the work of local BIPOC (black, indigenous, people of color) organizations.

Arthur H. Guenther Congressional Fellow:

Michelle Solomon will graduate with her Ph.D in Materials Science & Engineering from Stanford University, USA this summer, where she studied light-matter interactions in the group of Professor Jennifer Dionne. Her research concentrated on ways to use light to purify chemicals used in the pharmaceutical and agrochemical industries, with the goal of decreasing side effects. Before Stanford, she received a B.S. in Physics from Boston College, USA.

During graduate school, she also pursued an interest in science and energy policy, including a summer fellowship at the California Energy Commission in the Office of Vice Chair Janea Scott. While at the Energy Commission, she focused on electric vehicle infrastructure policy, particularly stakeholder outreach and mapping out charging programs across the state of California.

Michelle is excited to learn how scientists can be most useful in the process of developing policy, and would love to work on issues at the intersection of energy and health, such as environmental justice.

Trade Shows

The Congressional Science and Engineering Fellowship program will be featured as a special event Q&A session during the OSA Frontiers in Optics and Laser Science APS/DLS (FiO + LS) Conference on Monday, 14 September, 16:00 – 17:00 EDT.

About the Materials Research Society

MRS is an organization of over 16,000 materials researchers from academia, industry and government worldwide, and a recognized leader in promoting the advancement of interdisciplinary materials research and technology to improve the quality of life. MRS members are students and professionals hailing from physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics and engineering—the full spectrum of materials research. Headquartered in Warrendale, Pennsylvania (USA), MRS membership now spans over 80 countries, with nearly 50 percent of members residing outside the United States.

MRS serves and engages members across generations to advance their careers and promote materials research and innovation. The Society produces high-quality meetings and publications, assuring that members of all career stages can present and publish their most important and timely work to an international and interdisciplinary audience. MRS continues to expand its professional development portfolio, as well as promote diversity and inclusion in the scientific workforce, with career services for researchers worldwide. The Society advocates for the importance of scientific research and innovation to policymakers and the community. And the MRS Awards program honors those whose work has already had a major impact in the field, as well as those whose work shows great promise for future

leadership.

For more information about the Materials Research Society visit mrs.org and follow [@Materials_MRS](https://twitter.com/Materials_MRS).

About SPIE

SPIE is the international society for optics and photonics, an educational not-for-profit organization founded in 1955 to advance light-based science, engineering, and technology. The Society serves more than 255,000 constituents from 183 countries, offering conferences and their published proceedings, continuing education, books, journals, and the SPIE Digital Library. In 2019, SPIE provided more than \$5.6 million in community support including scholarships and awards, outreach and advocacy programs, travel grants, public policy, and educational resources. www.spie.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.

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