

NOGLSTP is OUT to Innovate Press Release

2020-02-16: NOGLSTSP Recognizes Brownell, Dell, and Whelan as LGBTQ+ Educator, Engineer, and Scientist of the Year for 2020 and Queer Science as Organization of the Year



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PRESS RELEASE. For immediate release.

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Seattle, WA, February 16, 2020

Today, the National Organization of Gay and Lesbian Scientists and Technical Professionals (NOGLSTP) is proud to announce the winners of its 2020 recognition awards for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) professionals in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). In addition, NOGLSTP recognizes the group Queer Science as their 2020 National Organization of the Year.

Dr. Sara E. Brownell's career was completely transformed, from a focus on



neuroscience research to a focus on exploring how to make undergraduate biology education more inclusive, by her postdoctoral research mentor, Dr. Kimberly Tanner. Brownell's work with Tanner opened her eyes to the divergent experiences and resources that students bring with them into the classroom and how those differences impact students' experience and success in science education. Compelled by that experience, Brownell has dedicated her career to researching and implementing

improvements in biology education that aim to diversify who becomes a scientist.

Brownell is an Associate Professor in the School of Life Sciences at Arizona State University. Her research focuses on strategies to improve undergraduate biology education, making it more inclusive for students with varying ethnicities, financial background, religious beliefs, LGBTQ+ identity, and gender identity. She applies quantitative and qualitative research methods, and she is highly motivated to publicize and implement those research conclusions. "What I learn can be implemented the next day in my classroom, so the impact on students can be immediate" Brownell said.

As a gay woman, Brownell believes her journey of accepting her sexual orientation and finding how to be open about it professionally provides her with insight into the experiences of students and colleagues, who are also struggling to merge their personal identities and career aspirations. She did not have LGBTQ+ examples or mentors as a student, and she is happy that she can now be this role model for her students, advisees, and colleagues. "Every semester, I come out to my 300-person class on the first day of class, and I feel so privileged to be able to share my identity in a way that can make the next generation of LGBTQ+ students feel more comfortable and accepted in the classroom," Brownell said.

NOGLSTP is awarding Brownell the 2020 LGBTQ+ Educator of the Year award for her combination of research, leadership, and personal commitment to improving science education, especially for underrepresented minorities.

In 2019, **Jonathan Dell** started a new position as an engineering manager, took on



the leadership of an LGBTQ employee resource group, and earned his Master's of Engineering degree. Even with all of these changes, one of his most powerful memories from this year is the opportunity to mentor an LGBTQ graduate student. This student struggled with her place in science, and Dell was able to share his experience and serve as a mentor in a way he would have valued as a student and young professional.

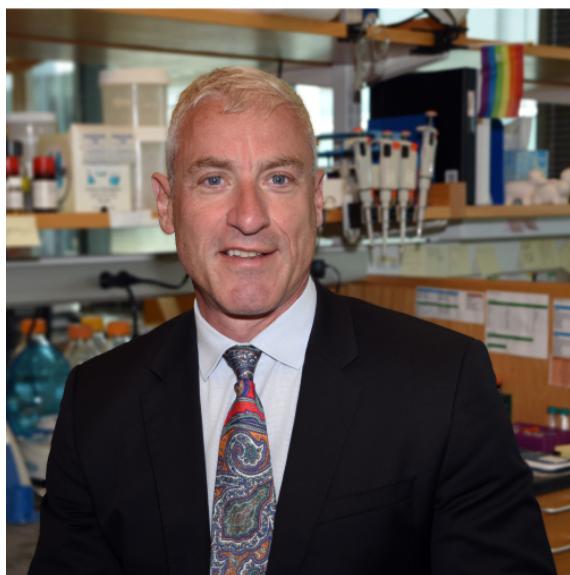
Dell is an Engineering Manager for New Business & Technology Development at Collins Aerospace.

At Collins, he leads research into engineering electrical generators for aerospace applications. Dell's team works with leading airplane manufacturers to customize the latest generator advancements for their aircraft and looks ahead to what will be possible in the future, such as more electric aircraft. Dell has been awarded five US patents for engineering innovations he contributed to.

Dell is a gay man and his process of being out earlier in his career overlapped with finding his place within the engineering profession. Since joining Collins in 2011, he has found a successful balance of being open about his personal truths and achieving professional success. "In engineering, it is crucial to have difficult conversations to solve challenging problems with a team. Coming out served as a personal experience of the value of authenticity and transparency and now helps me to be a more effective manager," Dell said.

NOGLSTP is awarding Dell the 2020 LGBTQ+ Engineer of the Year award for his significant contributions to advancing aerospace power engineering and his rapid advancement as an engineer and leader at Collins Aerospace.

Dr. Sean P. J. Whelan's virology research provides crucial insights into the function



and structure of emerging diseases. "Since 1980, there has been a new, emerging infectious disease of humans on average every six months. Almost two-thirds of those agents are enveloped viruses, and the techniques we apply can rapidly provide insight into two-thirds of them," Whelan said. His research framework applies to the recent emergence of the COVID-19 disease.

Whelan is the Marvin A. Brennecke Distinguished Professor & Chair of Molecular Microbiology at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. Before taking this position in 2020, he was Professor of Microbiology at Harvard Medical School. Stemming from his postdoctoral research, where Whelan developed genetic approaches to engineer vesicular stomatitis virus (VSV), he studies how diverse viruses that cause diseases such as rabies, Ebola, Lassa, and SARS infect cells and replicate. Whelan's technique allows the surface proteins of those highly hazardous viruses to be incorporated into VSV variants that can be studied rapidly and safely in the laboratory. He has also made major contributions to understanding the structure and function of the VSV replication machinery.

Whelan is a gay man, and his openness has created opportunities to connect, network, and work with other LGBTQ+ scientists. He chose to be open and encourages colleagues to be open to provide examples to students and young scientists. "It is important for LGBTQ students to understand that they may encounter some barriers, but those barriers are not insurmountable, and they can progress and succeed," Whelan said.

NOGLSTP is awarding Whelan the 2020 LGBTQ+ Scientist of the Year award for his outstanding research and groundbreaking discoveries in the field of virology.

Queer Science is a first-of-its-kind organization engaging LGBTQ+ high school



students in hands-on scientific experiments and demonstrations to encourage their passion in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Queer Science's events introduce these high school students to LGBTQ+ people working in STEM to ensure that participants see

themselves represented in STEM fields as they make choices about their education and career paths.

Queer Science was formed in 2016 primarily by graduate students at the University of Minnesota and scientists in industry. Queer Science's events have so far had over 150 student participants and engaged hundreds of others at youth-led events.

Queer Science engages LGBTQ+ professionals and graduate students to design a hand-on demonstration or activity for the students to complete. Students have built robots, purified lake water, hiked a science reserve, and studied the spectrum of astronomical objects. Volunteers and students also have time to talk, share, ask questions, and learn from one another.

Queer Science founder Julie Johnston is working to spread the word about Queer Science's successes and encourage other organizations to engage in this direct outreach. She hopes that other LGBTQ+ and STEM-focused organizations see this as an opportunity and that Queer Science becomes of a first-of-its-kind organization with many others also contributing.

NOGLSTP is awarding Queer Science the 2020 Organization of the Year for its commitment to promoting LGBTQ+ diversity in STEM and its example of how to reach high school students with a positive and encouraging message about their place in STEM.

"NOGLSTP's Recognition Awards were established in 2005 as a means to document and honor the contributions of outstanding LGBTQ+ science, engineering,

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technology, and mathematics professionals. They also honor corporations, academic institutions, and businesses that support LGBTQ+ professionals so that advancements can be made in those fields,” said Rochelle Diamond, chair of the NOGLSTP board of directors.

Additional information on past awards are available at <https://www.noglstp.org/programs-projects/recognition-awards/>. The 2020 Recognition Awards were announced during the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Annual Meeting in Seattle, WA on Feb. 16, 2020. NOGLSTP is an affiliate of AAAS and organizes events to advocate for LGBTQ+ people in STEM.

For more information about the awards, contact the recognition awards chair, TJ Ronningen at tj-board at noglstp dot org. For more information about NOGLSTP, contact Rochelle Diamond, NOGLSTP chair, at chair at NOGLSTP dot org.