Out to Innovate Announces 2021 Recognition Award Winners

Out to Innovate is proud to announce the winners of its 2021 recognition awards for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) professionals in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). NOGLSTP (now as Out to Innovate) has been recognizing exemplary individuals with LGBTQ+ Educator, Engineer, and Scientist of the year awards for over 15 years. Out to Innovate is also awarding its Walt Westman Award for outstanding contribution to its mission to support LGBTQ+ people in STEM.

2021 LGBTQ+ Educator of the Year: Prof. Miles Ott

The LGBTQ+ Educator of the Year award recognizes an educator who has significantly impacted STEM students through teaching, counseling, advocacy, and role modeling. Dr. Ott is an Assistant Professor of Statistical and Data Sciences at Smith College. His research focuses on the statistical analysis of social network data, network sampling methodologies, and the statistical implications of missing data in social networks. Ott applies these methods to the areas of substance abuse in emerging adults, HIV surveillance in hard-to-reach populations, and LGBTQ+ health.

In addition to inspiring students in the classroom, Prof. Ott serves as a research mentor and advisor. He has supervised independent projects, many of which are resulting in publications including mental health in transgender individuals as well as social network analyses to examine how positive health behaviors can proliferate through social connections. These research themes allow Ott to engage with LGBTQ+ students and fellow educators. He shares his teaching and personal experiences as a trans person in academia openly through his blog (milesott.com).

Prof. Ott’s impact on students both academically and personally was a powerfully moving theme in his letters of support. One student noted “as a professor he goes above and beyond to engage and delight his students into exploring new subjects... as a mentor and friend, he is encouraging and warm, always willing to offer a listening ear.” Another student stated, “he has supported so many other queer and transgender students, because he knows how difficult it is for many of us to find the kind of acceptance and encouragement necessary to succeed in STEM.”

When asked what advice he would give future LGBTQ+ STEM individuals, it is: “Your environment is tremendously important for your success. Look for mentors and colleagues who see you as a whole person and not just as a collection of accomplishments. The work it takes to find the right environment is always worth it. When you get the chance, be the supportive colleague or mentor that helps someone else do their best work.”

2021 LGBTQ+ Engineer of the Year: Guillermo Diaz-Fañas

The LGBTQ+ Engineer of the Year Award recognizes someone who has made outstanding contributions to their field, and recognizes the awardee for sustained contributions in design, production, management, or research. Guillermo Diaz-Fañas is an Infrastructure Climate Consultant at the Public-Private Infrastructure Advisory Facility (PPIAF) in the World Bank. In this role, Guillermo works with PPIAF grantees to introduce climate resilience and environmental sustainability in the policy and planning of private participation in infrastructure.

Diaz-Fañas was born in the Dominican Republic and moved to the U.S. for graduate school. Prior to joining PPIAF, he spent over ten years managing large infrastructure projects and leading climate and multi-hazard disaster resilience assessments. Diaz-Fañas is a recognized leader in earthquake and geotechnical engineering; he has published over 30 scientific articles and conference abstracts on the subject.

He has received numerous recognitions and awards for his contributions to the engineering community, including being the first openly gay individual to be awarded the New Faces of Civil Engineering title by the American Society of Civil Engineering (ASCE) in 2018. Other recognitions include 2020 Crain’s NY Notable LGBTQ Leaders and Executives, 2020 Earthquake Engineering Research Institute (EERI) Younger Member Award, 2019 ASCE Met Section Younger Member Award, 2019 ENR New York Top 20 under 40. In addition to his professional impact, NOGLSTP recognizes Diaz-Fañas’s work in increasing diversity and inclusion in civil engineering. One of these efforts is the founding of the national non-profit Queer Advocacy and Knowledge Exchange (Qu-AKE), an inclusive network (continued on p.2)
for LGBTQ+ individuals pursuing careers in infrastructure consulting, construction and design.

When asked about the scientific and social justice issues that keep him up at night, Díaz-Fañas did not hesitate in listing his three passions — climate change, geophysical hazards, and intersectionality. His disaster relief work drives efforts to “include sustainable building practices to tackle the challenges of global climate change.” Working on diversity, inclusion and equity initiatives in ASCE, EERI and the Deep Foundations Institute, as well as starting QuAKE have taught him “that we should celebrate the intersectionality of people and not focus on organizing them into layers or silos. There is a lot more to be done to ensure we can hear from those that currently do not have a voice.”

**2021 LGBTQ+ Scientist of the Year: Prof. Joseph Romano**

The LGBTQ+ Scientist of the Year Award recognizes an individual who has made outstanding contributions to their field through design, research, or management. This year's award winner is Dr. Joseph Romano, Professor of Statistics and Economics at Stanford University. Romano is a pre-eminent scholar in Statistics and Econometrics. He has published over 100 peer-reviewed publications in the areas of resampling, computer-intensive methods for nonparametric inference, and multiple hypothesis testing. These publications, along with three co-authored books, have impacted fields ranging from econometrics to climate science.

Romano has developed many new statistical tools, such as subsampling and the stationary bootstrap. The breadth and importance of Romano’s work are described in his letters of support, submitted by scholars across the United States and Europe. One letter notes that Romano has “made fundamental, indeed path-breaking, contributions to several distinct areas of statistics.” Another stated that he “pioneered novel uses of randomization tests...(leading to) a renewed interest in their use in economics.” These sentiments are shared by both the International Association of Applied Econometrics and the Institute of Mathematical Statistics, where he is an Elected Fellow.

In addition to his scholarly contributions, Romano is a celebrated educator and advocate for all students. His letter writers note that Romano, an openly gay male, has been an inspiration to many LGBTQ+ students at Stanford. “Joe is extremely caring, and he is always keenly aware of his ability to be a positive influence for LGBTQ+ scientists. His stature enables him to act as an ambassador for them.”

His advice for the next generation of LGBTQ+ STEM professionals? “Enjoy the process, life is continually learning, and you are always evolving. Be authentic, patient, and stay in the moment.”

**2021 Walt Westman Award: Daniele Cherniak**

The Walt Westman Award is the highest national award given by NOGLSTP (now Out to Innovate). The 2021 award recognizes the unselfish and outstanding contributions of Dr. Daniele Cherniak, who has served as NOGLSTP Bulletin editor for ten consecutive years. During her time as the voice of the organization, Cherniak has worked diligently to develop an efficient and professional means of communicating with the membership.

Cherniak is a Senior Research Scientist in the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. She earned her Ph.D. in Physics from SUNY Albany. She has since crossed disciplines where she focuses on geochemistry, specifically the characterization of atomic diffusion in rock-forming minerals. In this work, she employs the accelerator-based ion beam techniques Rutherford Backscattering Spectroscopy and Nuclear Reaction Analysis to measure diffusion profiles on the submicron scale, focusing on optimizing experimental and analytical techniques to measure the very slow diffusivities characteristic of many species in these materials. These data have application in a variety of fields, including studies of the early Earth, evolution of the Earth and extraterrestrial planets, and changes in chemical environments over time.

The Board of Directors commended Cherniak, who has served as a model for others and the organization as an out LGBTQ+ professional. She acknowledges that working as an academic researcher has changed during her career as “people are more open to diversity, and the environment is more welcome to women and LGBTQ+ contributors.” When asked what advice she has for future LGBTQ+ individuals pursuing STEM, her advice is true to her character. “Follow your interests, and don’t be afraid to be yourself.”

**Save the Date: Out To Innovate Awards Celebration**

You are invited to join the Out to Innovate Awards Celebration on Saturday, July 31 from 4-6 p.m. Eastern. This event will celebrate the winners of the 2021 Recognition Awards, the 2020 Ben Barres Fellowships, and the 2021 Out to Innovate Scholarships. The event will be fully virtual. It will include a keynote presentation and opportunities to network and socialize. The event is free, but registration will be required. Watch the website and the summer newsletter for more details. If you have questions or would like to help plan and organize this event, contact Christine Bland (rcb-board), Programs Chair.

**Apply to Join Out to Innovate’s Board**

Out to Innovate is a member-driven organization, and service on the Board of Directors is an opportunity to shape the direction of the organization directly. All members are eligible to serve on the Board of Directors, and we want you to consider serving. We are actively seeking the Board to represent a diverse mix of gender, race, ethnicity, age, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, professional background, skill sets, geography, and career stage. We welcome long-time members and new supporters who share our commitment to Out to Innovate’s mission. Applications are due by June 20. See the OTI/NOGLSTP website for details of the positions and the application process.
Congratulations to 2020 Ben Barres Fellows

Out to Innovate’s Ben Barres competitive fellowship was awarded to 11 applicants in 2020. Congratulations to all of these fellows! The winners are not required to disclose their award in publicity for these awards. The winners who have allowed us to disclose their awards are:

**Stephanie Nelli** is a postdoctoral fellow at Oxford University studying the ability to rapidly learn and reconfigure knowledge by human neuroimaging and neural network simulations.

**Esti Blanco-Elorrieta** is a postdoctoral fellow in Psychology at Harvard University’s Cognitive Neuropsychology Laboratory studying the neurobiology of multilingualism by using a combination of neuroimaging, computational, and behavioral methods.

**Kat Ellis-Guardiola** is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of California, Los Angeles investigating the underlying mechanisms of the proteins used by S. aureus to uptake heme.

**Vivian Miranda** is a postdoctoral research associate at the Steward Observatory of the University of Arizona investigating dark energy through space missions in combination with ground-based observatories.

**Tran Thanh Tam Pham** is a graduate student in biophysics at Dalhousie University studying the metabolomics of interaction between a G-protein coupled receptor (GPCR), the apelin receptor (AR), and its endogenous ligands, the bioactive apelin peptides.

**Toby Santamaria** is a graduate student in the College of Natural Science Department of Plant Biology at the Michigan State University studying restoration ecology and terrestrial biogeochemistry.

**Sun Simha** is a graduate student at New York University studying the plasticity of neurons in response to changes in activity levels.

**Claudia Astorino** is an evolutionary biologist and biological anthropologist finishing up a Ph.D. at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), in affiliation with the New York Consortium in Evolutionary Primatology, studying the variation of sexual dimorphism in the human skull.

**Eliot Halley Vrijmoet** is a graduate student at Georgia State University Department of Physics and Astronomy studying the sizes and shapes of multi-star systems orbits in the solar neighborhood (within 25 pc or 82 light-years of Earth).

**Anita Simha** is a graduate student at Duke University studying how plant species interact and coexist through the effect of fire history and the present community composition.

**Sororities May Open Membership to Nonbinary Students**

More than two dozen sororities from the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) voted during the organization’s annual membership meeting on a proposed policy amendment that could potentially open membership to nonbinary students. The policy would amend guidelines on who can participate in the formal sorority recruitment process. Currently NPC policy states that its 26 “women-only” sororities can recruit an individual who consistently lives and self-identifies as a woman, regardless of the gender assigned at birth, which includes transgender women. The change would clarify this policy to be more inclusive.

**Professional Development Fellowships for Trans, Intersex, and Non-Binary People in STEM**

Application window for scholarships to open in July

The Out to Innovate™ Professional Development Fellowship, formerly known as the Ben Barres Fellowship, is a $2000-$5000 award for professional development of trans, intersex, and non-binary graduate students and post-doctoral fellows in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

This fellowship is a merit-based award, and the support provided is intended, broadly construed, for the recipient’s professional development. Examples of eligible purposes include research support; conference/workshop attendance, or research travel; equipment/supplies; research assistant or translation services; and/or other professional uses. The fund is not intended to support personal expenses unrelated to research, such as food or rent. There is no age or citizenship restriction on eligibility for this fellowship, however, funds will be disbursed only to persons or institutions with US bank accounts or Zelle or PayPal accounts.

To apply for this fellowship, applicants will provide a brief description of their current research and research/career goals, a 2-3 paragraph funding proposal, a personal statement, their CV, and answers to demographics questions. Each application must have one letter of support, which may be written by any of the following: PI, Mentor, Advisor, or Colleague. The letter of support will be submitted by the recommender (not the applicant). Applications will be evaluated on clarity of written proposal, impact of proposed funding on applicant’s career, contributions to STEM and LGBTQ+ communities, and strength of support letter. If awarded funds, the recipient will upload a brief report and expense receipts within 6 months of receiving the award. Recipients of the fellowship will retain the option of remaining anonymous in public announcements of the award. Alternatively, they may choose to be publicly acknowledged in Out to Innovate’s publicity campaigns.

The application deadline for the first round of awards was September 30, 2020, and award decisions were made in December 2020. Winners of these scholarships are listed in the accompanying article on this page. We have been informed that there will be a new round of funding for 2021, with the application window for 2021 scholarships opening in July 2021.

The fellowship was initially named after Ben Barres, a prominent passionate transgender Stanford scientist who researched the role of microglia, an immune cell of the brain, and its interaction with neurons in development and disease. Barres was an ardent campaigner for equal opportunity in science, speaking his truth in media before telling his story through a posthumous memoir released after his death from cancer in 2017 at the age of 63. The fellowship name was changed in 2021 to avoid confusion among applicants for similarly named fellowships.

**Pentagon Institutes Policies Supporting Transgender Troops**

On March 31, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin rolled out new policies to facilitate the recruitment and retention of transgender people serving in the U.S. military. Following an executive order from President Biden rolling back a ban on transgender individuals in military service, the Pentagon developed new policies on enlistment and medical care for transgender people.
Chair’s Note

I was excited to see an article in *Science Careers* in late February highlighting recent efforts and actions to make journal policies more inclusive by making it easier for authors to specify name changes.

Recent advocacy around this has been driven by transgender researchers seeking an improved means of keeping their work accurately associated with them. A working group of researchers was organized, first informally and then under the auspices of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), to consider the question of name changes and develop guidelines to share with publishers. Some publishers had already made efforts to be more inclusive, but others had not, and the tradition within journal publishing was to treat an article as an historical record that could not be altered after publication.

The COPE working group has published a statement on its values and vision that is compelling. As they write, “trans authors have to argue for the right to be properly credited for their scholarship…” This is a fundamental contradiction between the stated intention of publishers to communicate information with accurate attribution and the outcomes of some of their policies. Both fairness and accuracy are advanced by the proposed name-change policies.

The COPE working group have identified five guiding principles: change accessibility to authors, comprehensiveness of the change across records, invisibility to avoid drawing attention to a gender change, expediency and simplicity, and maintenance of a change to ensure a change is effective. The group is working from these principles to develop additional specific guidelines.

Like many efforts to address the rights of one group, this effort promises to benefit a wide range of people. Myself and other married colleagues faced a name-change decision at the time of getting married that was heavily influenced by a fear of complicating our publishing track record.

The members of the COPE working group are Dr. Theresa Jean Tanenbaum, Irving D Rettig, H Michael Schwartz, BM Watson, Teddy G Goetz, Katta Spiel, and Mike Hill. My thanks to this group for their effort to make this change. They have my support and Out to Innovate’s support.

Links for more information:

*Science Careers* article: [https://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2021/02/new-more-inclusive-journal-policies-ease-author-name-changes-published-papers](https://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2021/02/new-more-inclusive-journal-policies-ease-author-name-changes-published-papers)


- TJ Ronningen

“Funding the Future” - Fundraising Committee

The Fundraising Committee was established in 2020 with the stated goal of developing avenues to obtain sustained funding support from individuals, corporations, and foundations to support Out to Innovate needs and objectives. The committee is currently pursuing a 4-pronged approach to support a fundraising campaign:

- Goal - How much do we need?
- Mission – Why (i.e., what are we going to do with the money)?
- Tactics – How are we going to raise the money?
- Timeline – When do we raise it/when do we need it?

Preliminary estimates indicate that the organization will need to raise $220,000-$250,000 annually in 5 years’ time to support the agreed-to mission. This is a 2- to 3-fold increase over our average annual fundraising over the last decade. A meeting on February 7 established short- and long-range strategic goals to determine the funding targets. The following goals, among others, were discussed at that time:

- Increase the current number of scholarship awards by 2 per year, ramping up to 10 in 5 years for each scholarship level.
- Maintain fellowship awards at a level of ~ $40K with intent to increase.
- Support a possible full scholarship ($50k) in ten years.
- Establish a salaried, part-time CEO position in 2-3 years with responsibility to administer the organization’s operations and responsibility to represent the organization at events and in partnerships
- Establish ongoing budget profile to support Out to Innovate symposia planning activities
- Provide funds to support a recurring board retreat and organizational development meeting (facility, food, speaker/moderator) to be held about every three years
- Provide funding to cover ongoing organizational expenses

A meeting was held on April 9 to discuss the tactics of raising money. The discussion was wide in scope, touching on a variety of fundraising approaches, from conducting an outreach to current members, to enlisting support from STEM-related corporations. Current fundraising methods (grants, etc.) were also discussed to determine effectiveness and potential for increasing the scope of efforts. No definitive decisions were made at this meeting, but a strong foundation was established to further future discussions. A follow-up meeting is being planned before the end of the 2nd quarter to finalize an approach and establish a schedule with defined deadlines.

Fundraising is a team effort that requires a sustained effort. If you have any interest in participating in this endeavor, please feel free to contact Terry Demby at td-board@noglstp.org.

- Terry M. Demby, Committee Chair

Forward Progress on Measuring LGBTQ+ People in STEM

In March, the U.S. House of Representatives released their version of the NSF re-authorization bill, which funds NSF for the next 5 years – the National Science Foundation for the Future Act (H.R. 2225). It explicitly mandates that NSF include sexual orientation and gender identity questions in U.S. STEM workforce surveys, so long as the questions are deemed feasible and beneficial. The National Science Foundation has agreed to begin piloting both sexual orientation and gender identity questions for its U.S. STEM workforce surveys in April 2021 on multiple samples totaling approximately 7,800 respondents. Initial results are scheduled to be available able this summer.
Out to Innovate Stands Against Anti-Asian Racism and Bigotry

Asians, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are experiencing a rise in incidents of hate and violence since the start of the coronavirus pandemic. These crimes and murders echo a historical pattern that has seen Asians, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders targeted in crimes evoking xenophobia, misogyny, and stereotypes that marginalize Asians, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. A democratic society that supposes itself to be based on the precepts of liberty and justice for all cannot coexist with an ideology that demeans and debases members of that society. LGBTQ people, especially LGBTQ Asian and Asian Pacific as well as LGBTQ people of color, have long been victims of this brutality born of bigotry.

We, the members of Out to Innovate, are no strangers to the ills of bigotry. We have no illusions of our ability to single-handedly solve this societal illness known as racism, but we also acknowledge that to simply be aware of racism is another form of inaction. If we are not part of the solution, then we are part of the problem. We reiterate again that we need to acknowledge our weaknesses and set meaningful goals to address them. We need to be committed to real and lasting change not only in our society but in our organization and our sister organizations. Successful innovation in science and technology is dependent on an open, diverse, and inclusive workforce that brings all minds to bear on finding solutions to our enigmas. We stand for inclusion, diversity, education, equity and accessibility. We stand with our colleagues and people of all races and ethnicities against injustice and systemic racism. We call on all of our colleagues to fight for an end to oppression and inequity.

We therefore pledge ourselves to honor these, our core values:

• Support efforts to combat systemic racism in the STEM fields to ensure a more just and fair society.
• Strive to be inclusive as an organization, learning from and empowering our members to share knowledge.
• Support racial justice and equity in all institutions.
• Solicit the help of our local, state, and nationally-elected officials, demanding their commitment to racial and economic equality and justice.

We must finally and effectively confront racism and bigotry in all its forms. We must advance the cause of those historically left at the margins of society, and promote the inclusion of all people in the fruits and benefits of society. We stand with oSTEM, SWE, SHPE, and SASE in such efforts.

Camp Pride Summer Leadership Academy Program in July

The 15th annual Camp Pride Summer Leadership Academy will be conducted online with a digital three-day livestream on Friday, July 16, Saturday, July 17 and Sunday, July 18, 2021. Camp Pride is one of the longest-running LGBTQ+ summer leadership camps for youth across the country and the only one of its kind for college students. It continues to be the premier national training academy for social justice and grassroots activism for LGBTQ+ and ally young adults at colleges and universities. Typically, the in-person summer camp spans five days and would train 50-75 LGBTQ+ young people and advisors from college campuses across the country. Due to COVID-19 safety concerns and questions remaining about in-person large gatherings this Summer, Camp Pride will be held once again online this July. Much like in years prior, the digital Camp Pride will also feature keynote speakers, panelists and entertainment geared toward LGBTQ+ youth. Although there will not be a separate Academy for LGBTQ Advisors this year, we encourage advisors to participate fully in the digital program, learning with and from LGBTQ+ student leaders and others. Registration is $265 per person for the three day 2021 Digital Camp Pride, but students can apply for a waiver. For more information, go to: https://www.campuspride.org/digitalcamppride
We are now accepting applications for the 2021 Out to Innovate Scholarships. Scholarship support is available for undergraduate, graduate, and community college transfer students studying STEM fields who identify as LGBTQ+. This year we are very excited to also offer the Amy A. Ross Scholarship in Bioscience, Avangrid Scholarships for engineering, and an InPhi Scholarship for engineering or physics. The application deadline is June 5, 2021, more information can be found on the scholarship webpage. Please share these opportunities with your students, colleagues, and networks!

We are also in need of additional scholarship reviewers. This is a great opportunity to support the next generation of amazing LGBTQ+ students. As a reviewer, you can expect to read and rate 20-25 applications over a monthlong window. If you are interested, please email Rebecca Callahan at rc-board@noglstp.org with your name, degree, field, pronouns, race/ethnicity, current position and institution, and other information useful to assessing conflict of interest (for example, if you’ve provided a letter of recommendation for an applicant). The information you share will be used to match reviewer expertise with application pools as well as to balance reviewer panels. We greatly appreciate your help in supporting our scholarship programs.

Mark Your Calendars
- June 5: Out to Innovate Scholarship deadline
- June 20: Application deadline for membership on Out to Innovate Board
- July 16-18: Camp Pride Summer Leadership Academy online livestream program
- July 31: Out to Innovate Awards Celebration

ABOUT Out to Innovate
Out to Innovate (formerly NOGLSTP) is a 501(c)(3) educational organization and professional society of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, asexual, queer people, and allies employed or interested in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) fields. Out to Innovate empowers LGBTQ+ individuals in STEM by providing education, advocacy, professional development, networking, and peer support. Out to Innovate educates all communities regarding scientific, technological, and medical concerns of LGBTQ+ people. Surface mail may be addressed to: Out to Innovate, PO BOX 91803, Pasadena, CA, 91109-9813. For more information, see our website at www.noglstp.org.

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Affiliates: (more info at: https://tinyurl.com/y9kqk2lps):
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