

The American Physical Society facing diversity and equity, and the difficult times to come

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The Annual Leadership Meeting (ALM) of the American Physical Society (APS) took place from February 4 to February 6, 2021. The meeting was held, due to COVID-19 pandemic, on the APS online platform. ALM presented an exciting opportunity for APS members and leaders to discuss challenges facing the physics community, celebrate some of the latest accomplishments in physics, and hear presentations related to the actual running of the APS.

The ALM was preceded by the traditional Congressional Visits Day, on February 2-3, an important event organized each year by the APS Office of Government Affairs, which gave the opportunity to selected groups of APS members to be admitted - this year virtually - at the Capitol Hill Offices to advocate for science and specific issues related to the physics community. The APS has some 55000 members of whom more than 20% live outside the US.

Conveners of the ALM were the 2021 APS President, Sylvester James Gates Jr. or Jim Gates (Brown University), and the new APS CEO, Jonathan Bagger. In his opening address, President Gates stressed how in 2021 the US, and consequently also the APS, will be facing four major issues: recovery from pandemic, economy, inclusion and climate change. While repeatedly mentioning diversity and equity, and the difficult times to come, his final words have been: *"Keep APS strong"*.

The ALM hosted a series of panel discussions on many issues at large:

- *"Thriving Physics Departments: Proactive Steps to Take in Difficult Economic Times"* (on how the new economics of higher education, changing demographics, and the economic wake of COVID-19 compel universities to reconsider how education survives and thrives).
- *"Effecting Change: Individual Actions and Leadership"* (on how individuals can lead to effect change, particularly to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion).
- *"Communicating Science to Nonscientists in Post-Election & Post-Pandemic America"* (on how a major effort can be made to mitigate the widespread ignorance, confusion, and mistrust of science, as epitomized by the US abysmal response to the COVID Pandemic, existing in the polarized society we live in); this panel, hosted by Kip Thorne, Nobel Laureate, saw, in particular, the lively participation of Brian Greene, Chairman of the World Science Festival.
- *"Federal Policies to Strengthen Science in Service to the Nation"* (on the views from Capitol Hill and on how to move forward in a more competitive landscape); this panel was attended, among others, by Bill Foster, Member of Congress, by Sethuraman Panchanathan, Director of the National Science Foundation (NSF), and by Neal Lane, Science Advisor to President Clinton, and former NSF Director.

The ALM also focused on the work with APS of unit leaders, committee chairs, and other society leaders and volunteers, with parallel presentations and workshops on the following topics (some of them very specific to the APS):

- Ethics Committee 2021: Vision & Panel Discussion
- Finance 101: Learning to Manage an APS Unit
- APS Careers and Professional Development Programs
- APS Journals: Creating a Welcome Environment for All Scientists
- APS International Affairs: Serving Physicists Across the Globe
- Communicating with Members & Beyond
- The Ins and Outs of APS Engage
- All About APS Meeting Services
- APS Chapters and APS Innovation Fund

- APS Diversity & Inclusion Initiatives
- Role of Philanthropy at APS
- Membership: Recruitment and Retention

Finally, due space was given in the ALM to "rapid fire" physics talks from student and early career APS award recipients, to the presentation of the society's top honors, in particular the 2021 APS Medal for Exceptional Achievement in Research, and to a touching talk by APS Past President Phil Bucksbaum who shared his challenging experience on leading the Society in 2020.

The ALM was attended by Luisa Cifarelli, Past Chair of the APS Forum on International Physics (FIP) for 2021, who then reported to the Council of the Italian Physical Society (SIF) about some inspiring initiatives and specific activities that in her view could be implemented also within the SIF.

This year the FIP, in partnership with other APS units, has organized special sessions at both the APS March Meeting (March 15-19, 2021) and April Meeting (April 17-20, 2021) on the themes of: *"Physics for Development"*, *"Outstanding International & Early Career Physics"*, *"Science Diplomacy"*, *"Astro and Multimessenger Physics"*, *"Engaging with the International Physics Community"*, *"Large Facility Collaborations"*. Many distinguished international speakers have been invited to lecture. Of course, again both Meetings will take place online.



Luisa Cifarelli - Professor of experimental physics at the University of Bologna. She has carried out research in subnuclear physics and astroparticle physics at the major European laboratories. Member of the Academia Europaea and the Academy of Sciences of Bologna, honorary president of the Italian Physical Society, she has been president of the European Physical Society and of the "Enrico Fermi" Historical Museum of Physics and Research and Study Center in Italy.