



CONNECTIONS

Linking EEO, Diversity and Science

Issue #45

EEO/Diversity Newsletter for NOAA Research

June 2020

AA Craig McLean: Diversity, Inclusion and Racial Injustice

The tragic death of George Floyd in Minneapolis and the protests that have taken place across the nation and around the world call us all to action. In seeing the emotion of the people of all races throughout these demonstrations, editorials, and interviews, it is hard to avoid the scale and scope of the challenge. That said, what has impacted me the most is hearing the experiences of our own employees and trying to connect the treatment our own employees have endured societally and with unwarranted police treatment, and the esteem, respect, and admiration we hold for these same trusted and valued employees. The incongruity is remarkable, and the only explanation I can find is race. Racial injustice continues to persist in our society and to impact our workplace and our personnel. Discussions we have recently held surrounding this issue have clearly emphasized to me how much and how often our NOAA colleagues have encountered challenging circumstances due to prejudice and discrimination. All of us must lead from where we stand in order to make a positive difference and address this long standing scourge. It is a moral imperative that we do so. And it is also the law. Within NOAA, we are taking action in coordination with NOAA's Office of Inclusion and Civil Rights to increase our understanding of the problem and how it is impacting our workforce,

and then, to establish well-defined steps to improve our workplace culture and to support our employees and teammates in a caring and cohesive manner. I will keep all of the OAR team apprised as we develop our plan for specific action going forward.

But a "plan" can sound hollow and remind people that we've seen and heard this before. We do need actions now, and I have found that listening to what people (including contractors and Cooperative Institute employees) have to say is moving, and monumental. Understanding each other is a component of inclusion. Let's invite people to talk, and let's listen, and then let's construct our own personal and organizational commitment to defeat this blight of conscious or unconscious bias, and even more overt negative treatment. Achieving a positive workplace climate that is merit based for all OAR personnel has been a priority for us for quite some time. Ten years ago, OAR conducted a workplace culture survey to collect insights into our organization. What we learned from that assessment had a positive impact on OAR. We have worked hard to improve communications and to address workplace concerns as they arise. We have made progress in increasing the diversity of lab and program leadership.

Building on this previous work, we engaged AvantGarde to carry out a comprehensive survey effort to

understand your views of the working environment. This firm has completed their analysis of the findings and is in the process of briefing each individual lab, program, and staff offices. Leadership across OAR has been briefed on the Enterprise-Wide (OAR-wide) results. The timing of this and the national focus on racial equality (finally) will be good for us as a community. I encourage the all hands meetings that your directors will be holding to review and discuss the organizational health and culture assessments unique to your component of OAR as evidenced in the surveys and analysis, and to open a new door on the subjects before us now. I have found that we have many positive aspects of our workplace culture and we do not want to lose these, but we have also discovered opportunities to improve, including in the areas of diversity and inclusion.

I ask you to join me in a commitment to our workforce, to actively support diversity and inclusion; to recognize that we are all valued in this organization; that we are judged only by the quality of our work and contributions; to treat each other with the personal respect, dignity, and honesty that we would hope to receive ourselves; and to note that our success depends on every one of us.

In conclusion, while NOAA and OAR are wonderful places to work, we still have work to do. Using both the

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AA Craig McLean: Diversity, Inclusion and Racial Injustice (con't)

insights provided by our workplace culture assessment and the spotlight on racial injustice brought to the forefront with such clarity and urgency by the recent tragedies, I am committed to supporting all of our team members and making the changes needed to continue to improve OAR for everyone. I recognize that diversity, inclusion, and fairness are not abstract concepts but are goals we must strive for with vigor to achieve what is right and just. We will learn from one another and build each other up so that we all are empowered to achieve all that is possible. Thank you for helping with this continuing journey, and your commitment to fostering a culture of diversity, inclusion, and equity within OAR.

Sincerely,

Craig McLean

Leah Dubots: From NOAA Pathways Internship Program to an “EPIC” NOAA Employee

By: Dr. DaNa L. Carlis, PMP, NOAA Weather Program Office (WPO) Program Manager for the Earth Prediction Innovation Center (EPIC) and Next-Generation Global Prediction System (NGGPS)



Photo: Leah Dubots, NOAA Weather Program Office Management and Program Analyst

Ms. Leah Dubots is a recent graduate of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) who completed a Master's degree in Public Policy (M.P.P.) concentrating in Urban Policy. Leah began her career as a Pathways Program Intern in the Weather Program Office (WPO) and recently transitioned to a full-time position as Management and Program Analyst for the Earth Prediction Innovation Center (EPIC) program. In 2018, Leah graduated Magna Cum Laude from Towson University with a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science & Studies concentrating in Policy & Management with a minor in Economics.

In 2019, Leah applied for the NOAA Pathways Program Internship opportunity on USAJOBS. Leah describes why she applied for the Pathways Program stating, "I've always wanted to be a public servant but never thought I would have the opportunity to work in the federal government, let alone NOAA. Once I started working, I knew it was the right place to be; surrounded by people who are passionate about making change, eager to mentor, greet you with a warm smile (and donuts!), and never stop working to serve the public."

Acting Director of WPO, Dr. Kandis Boyd, describes Leah's contribution and transition to WPO stating, "Leah's efforts to the EPIC team have been revolutionary for both the program and the entire office. For example, Leah introduced a hashtag to the 2019 Community Workshop. As a result, over 200 tweets were posted using the #EPICworkshop2019 hashtag via Twitter. This was a game changer because workshop organizers were able to see comments from attendees in real-time, and they changed the agenda of the final day of the workshop to address comments posted. This helped the workshop end

on a positive note. Leah documented her experiences organizing the workshop creating a template for planning future workshops and seminars."

When asked what's most exciting about becoming a full-time federal employee at WPO, Ms. Dubots states that "I'm most excited to continue working with the EPIC team implementing this exciting new initiative. EPIC is a challenge, but I can't wait to continue working with the "epic" EPIC team to establish the program and make forecast model improvements that provide more accurate and reliable operational forecast products. NOAA's mission is one close to my heart, and I can't wait to see what my future holds with this agency!"

In her spare time, Leah enjoys reading, hiking, and kayaking the beautiful Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

To learn more about the Pathways Program, please visit: <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-information/students-recent-graduates/#url=Overview>

Mandatory Telework - An Employee Perspective

What?!?!? I have to work from home. NOOOOooooooo!!!!!!!

By: Alejandra Lorenzo, IT Specialist, AOML and EEO Advisory Committee Alternate Representative for AOML



We were allowed liberal telework. The building belongs to me.

I fully expected to have AOML to myself. That most of our staff would work from home and I would be Queen for a week...or more. It only lasted one day.

Then we were told -- we are ALL under mandatory telework. I was crushed. How will I make this happen? My internet is too slow for continued telework. I don't have an office. I don't have a desk. I don't have an office chair. I live in a house. I work in an office not a house.

NO! We don't have enough toilet paper for both me and my mom to stay home all day.

The first week was physically painful. Working from home using a 13 inch PC screen is hard on the back, neck, shoulders and eyes. It required a visit to my office to bring home a monitor, keyboard, CAC reader, and weights. Side note: This is the time to get those biceps and triceps looking solid. Two months later - no more physical pain. Less wobbly arm muscles.

I am an extrovert and problem solver. Imagine sitting home with just my mom, whom I love – most days, and not anyone else to interact with. Imagine, well I don't need to image, not having the skills to work on the problem affecting us. I felt lonely and pissed.

What to do besides getting up every morning and working. Yes, there is housework, which I hate, cooking meals for me and mom, which I enjoy – except for my waist line, binging on Netflix and Prime, which is killing my vision, and then just looking out the window. Not enough.

Then I was inspired, more like compelled, to deliver cookies to our Front Line workers. Those souls that have continued to take care of us so that we may remain safe and sound at

home [I focused on the medical community]. I got on Facebook and told my friends that:

1. I don't bake
2. I needed those that do to bake cookies
3. Package the cookies in individual bags
4. To deliver to me at a pickup point [it was pretty cool showing up with masks in a parking lot and moving packages from one car to the next.
5. Inform my friend that works at Jackson Ryder Center get ready cookies are coming your way
6. Inform my friend at South Miami Hospital Imaging get ready cookies are coming your way
7. Tell the bakers the program is expanding stock up we are hitting every hospital that will have us

In the last month we have delivered as far south as Key Largo, FL – Mariner's Hospital and north to St. Mary's Hospital in West Palm Beach. [AOML is in the middle] And even though there is now a group of people that bake and deliver cookies to our Front Liners as a way to show them gratitude for all their work and, as a side benefit, expand their waist lines, they are really helping us.

You see, we all need something to do. Most of us are strangers to each other. We only talk on FB to setup the pickup and delivery of cookies. Since we all wear masks, don't ask me what anyone looks like. We are all so different and yet so much the same. The sameness comes from a wish, desire, more like need to do something. "Now I feel as if I am doing something." Those were the first words they shared with me when we delivered to our first hospital.

We all need to do something. The something that works for us is taking cookies to our local hospitals, so that those caring for us know we care for them.

I get up every morning. Eat breakfast with my mom. Do my work. Then fill my afternoon making sure cookies get to our Front Liners. Now I feel I lot better. My advice to us all, find something that gives you what you need. It can be anything. Then just do it.

The extrovert in me, now has more contact with people. The problem solver found a way to make other people's waist line grow.

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EEO/Diversity Across OAR

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Then again, the Front Liners are working so hard we will need to up the deliveries and calories. What do you think about pizza?

The NOOOOOooooo!!!! Is now an Okay – I can make this work. It's working. But I do want to return to my office at some point.

"The one thing that I've tried to do during the pandemic is pickup a new hobby or skill since I'm spending much of my time inside. I'm starting to learn how to play acoustic guitar using youtube videos as my teacher. It's been a lot of fun and something challenging that I can focus my time on other than teleworking."

Dr. DaNa Carlis, NOAA WPO

Air Resources Laboratory (ARL)

Dr. LaToya Myles, Deputy Director, ARL/ATDD, co-chaired the science fair and STEM night at Amherst Elementary School in Knoxville, TN, on February 20. The science fair featured over 30 projects from students in kindergarten through 5th grade. As co-chair, she developed project instructions that aligned with the scientific method, created scoring rubrics, and announced winners for each grade level. In addition, she coordinated with the school's PTA to host the event as part of *Take Your Family to School Week*, a national PTA grant program to revitalize parent involvement in education. Dozens of hands-on STEM activities were hosted by the University of Tennessee's Center for Ultra-Wide-Area Resilient Electric Energy Transmission Networks and Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

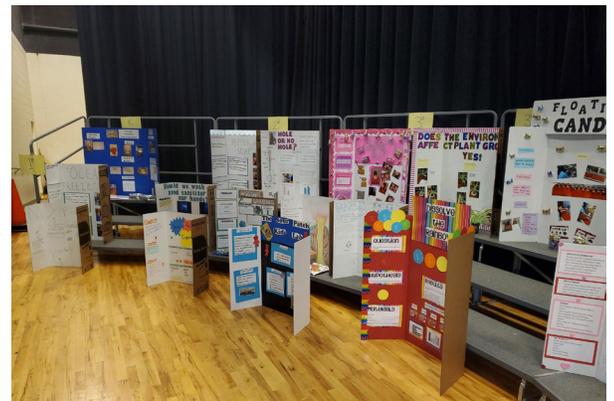


Photo: Posters at the science fair and STEM night at Amherst Elementary School in Knoxville, TN.

Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory (PMEL)

PMEL and JISAO employees Paige Lavin, Heather Tabisola and Adi Hanein volunteered their Saturday to serve as competition officials interacting with high school students during Orca Bowl. Each year, high school students from across Washington come together for a day of friendly competition and exciting enrichment experiences at Orca Bowl, the state's regional National Ocean Sciences Bowl® event. Orca Bowl is one of 25 regional competitions and challenges and recognizes Washington state's high school students' knowledge of the world's oceans. Washington Sea Grant partners with UW's College of the Environment to offer the program.



Photo: Paige Lavin and Adi Hanein with other volunteers dressed up as the Octonauts during Orca Bowl.



Photo: PMEL at the University of Washington career fair.

PMEL, Workforce Management, Office of Coast Survey, NOAA Corps and Sanctuaries employees staffed three tables at the 2020 University of Washington Environmental Career Fair. The career fair is an opportunity to interact directly with environmentally focused students ranging in education and skill level from undergraduate freshmen to recent graduates and alumni. After talking to students, NOAA staff stayed to talk to student ambassadors from the various departments in the College of the Environment.

National Severe Storms Laboratory (NSSL)

Bob Rabin became a faculty member at Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College (KBOCC) in December 2019. KBOCC is one of 37 Tribal Colleges and Universities in the U.S. The KBOCC mission is to provide post-secondary education rich in Ojibwa culture, tradition, and beliefs that promotes lifelong learning.

Bob taught his first on-line class, *Science Issues Today: Climate Change and Indigenous People*, during the spring semester. In addition to providing an introduction to weather prediction and climate observations in the Great Lakes and Arctic Regions, the course allowed students to report their own observations, create their own seasonal forecast, explore how changing weather and climate may affect traditional Anishinaabe lifeways, and encouraged new ideas for future adaptation to possible changes. Anishinaabe lifeways are dependent on wild rice or manoomin, birch bark, maple syrup and cold water fish.

Bob visited the campus in mid-March and taught an earth science class and had a NOAA booth at a career fair for local high school students. There was considerable interest in NOAA activities and internship opportunities. The event provided an opportunity for Bob to meet staff of the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community Natural Resources Department and to discuss mapping of wild rice habitat supported by NOAA.



Photo: A sculpture at KBOCC by artist Rich Pathtel, Presence Chainsaw Sculpture, Chassell, MI.

NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration and Research (OER)

Virtual Screening and Panel Discussion of “Can We Talk?” Documentary Film Spurs Insight and Conversation

OER's Catalina Martinez worked with the NOAA Office of Inclusion and Civil Rights to host a virtual screening of Dr. Kendall Moore's documentary film *Can We Talk? Difficult Conversations with Underrepresented People of Color: Sense of Belonging and Obstacles to STEM Fields*. Registrants were given access to view the film, and were then invited to participate in a virtual panel discussion moderated by the filmmaker on April 23.

Besides Catalina, panelists included RDML Timothy Gallaudet, Deputy NOAA Administrator, Brandon Jones, NSF, Vernon Morris, former Director, Howard University NCAR Center, Wendy Smythe, University of Minnesota Duluth, and Aradhna Tripathi of UCLA's Center for Diverse Leadership in Science. The response to this event was tremendous, with 117 individual views of the film, questions submitted in advance as well as during the event, and a maximum of 161 panel attendees. Information shared will help the OICR identify important topics to address going forward.



Photo: The virtual panel discussion featured speakers representing NOAA leadership and leaders in the field of diversity and inclusion.

The following are a few excerpts from post-event comments:

"I wish we could have these conversations more often, especially with NOAA leadership."

"The documentary and panel session opened up eyes and voices."

"Well thought-out discussion of how to meaningfully include underrepresented minority groups in science."

"An impressive, knowledgeable, caring, and accomplished group of professionals. Gives back faith in a tumultuous time."

"I am proud to know that NOAA is spearheading this effort."

"Let's continue to have difficult conversations and invite company."

NOAA Research EEO/Diversity Program Office



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ABOUT US

VISION OF EEO OFFICE: To assist the Agency in creating a diverse workforce that is inclusive and free of discriminatory and retaliatory actions.

EEO MISSION: To bring awareness to employees, applicants for employment and management about EEO through the following:

Empowerment: Consultation services to employees, managers and applicants for employment.

Exposure: Recruitment and outreach activities for short and long-term recruitment.

Education: Federal EEO Mandated training, Special Emphasis programs and *Connections* newsletter.

Evaluation: Monitor employment statistics to prepare reports for NOAA, DOC, EEOC and OPM.

CONNECTIONS NEWSLETTER

Connections is published quarterly by the OAR EEO/Diversity Program Office. The purpose is to share accomplishments and to link Diversity, EEO and Science within all of the OAR laboratories and program offices. If you have any newsletter ideas, suggestions and stories to contribute, please email Georgia Madrid - georgia.madrid@noaa.gov.



Website: eoo.oar.noaa.gov

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

EEO COUNSELING:

Federal law prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex (including sexual harassment and pregnancy discrimination), age (40 years and over), physical or mental disability, including the provision of reasonable accommodations for qualified applicants and employees with disabilities or genetic information (GINA), gender identity, and retaliation for participating in activities protected by the civil rights statutes. In addition, NOAA prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Employees, NOAA Corps Officers, or applicants for employment with NOAA who believe that they have been discriminated or retaliated against may contact an EEO Counselor. The Counselor will attempt to resolve the matter and furnish information about filing a complaint of discrimination. To preserve your rights under the law, you must contact an EEO Counselor within 45 CALENDAR DAYS of the date of alleged discrimination.

To initiate EEO Counseling or for more information, contact:

NOAA Office of Inclusion and Civil Rights
Phone: (301) 713-0500 or 1-800-452-6728

Fax: 301-713-0983

Website: www.eeo.noaa.gov

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION:

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Website: www.wfm.noaa.gov/adr/

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www.noaa.gov/opportunities/student-opportunities#page=1