



A WORD FROM...

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Courtesy of Billy Durvin.

Women's History Month brings focus to the accomplishments of women, many of which are being celebrated in this issue of the *Notices of the AMS*. It is also an appropriate time to reflect upon the barriers that women have faced, and continue to face, in our mathematics discipline. Recent attention has focused on sexual harassment in our workplaces, amplified by the #metoo movement initiated in late 2017. In 2018, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine issued a consensus study report titled *Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine*.² This report made a clear case for action. A National Academies overview of the study report notes: "System-wide changes to the culture and climate in higher education are needed to prevent and effectively respond to sexual harassment. There is no evidence that current policies, procedures, and approaches—which often focus on symbolic compliance with the law and on avoiding liability—have resulted in a significant reduction in sexual harassment. Colleges and universities and federal agencies should move beyond basic legal compliance to adopt holistic, evidence-based policies and practices to address and prevent all forms of

sexual harassment and to promote a culture of civility and respect."³ This report prompted a National Academies workshop, "Together We Can Do Better: A Convening of Leaders in Academia to Prevent Sexual Harassment,"⁴ as well as a number of affiliated events by academic institutions and scientific professional societies.⁵

Two years ago, the American Mathematical Society (AMS) joined with the Association for Women in Mathematics, the American Statistical Association, the Mathematical Association of America, and the Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics, as well as more than one hundred other professional societies, to become inaugural members of the Societies Consortium on Sexual Harassment in STEMM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine). Together, we pooled our resources to accelerate the development of tools and resources to help us build "communities actively intolerant of sexual and intersecting bases of harassment and building bridges for collective efforts."⁶

To effect change at the scale called for, we must address both our *policies* and our *culture*.

Policies are starting to change: In September 2018, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) announced a Fellow revocation policy.⁷ In June 2019, the U.S. National Academy of Sciences (NAS) voted to allow expulsion of members for breaches of conduct, including sexual harassment.⁸ Up until then, no method existed to revoke these lifetime honors at the AAAS or the NAS. The Consortium on Sexual Harassment in STEMM has created a lawyer-vetted and customizable template for member societies to guide us in our efforts to develop similar revocation policies.

Here at the AMS, our Council approved the establishment of a new Prize Oversight Committee whose inaugural charge includes, among other things, recommending "policies and procedures for the revocation of an award or

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¹The opinions expressed here are not necessarily those of the *Notices* or the AMS.

²<https://www.nap.edu/catalog/24994/sexual-harassment-of-women-climate-culture-and-consequences-in-academic>

³<https://www.nap.edu/resource/24994/Sexual%20Harassment%20of%20Women%20ReportHighlights.pdf>

⁴<https://sites.nationalacademies.org/shstudy/index.htm>

⁵https://sites.nationalacademies.org/SHSTUDY/events/SHSTUDY_186859

⁶<https://educationcounsel.com/societiesconsortium/>

⁷<https://www.aaas.org/programs/fellows/revocation-process>

⁸<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2019/06/national-academy-sciences-allow-expulsion-harassers>

fellowship, consistent with best practices of other societies and academic institutions.”⁹ This committee plans to bring a proposal forward to Council in 2020 to establish a policy for the revocation of AMS fellow status. Future work of this committee may include a review of our existing Policy Statements and Guidelines,¹⁰ such as our Policy on a Welcoming Environment,¹¹ after the Consortium on Sexual Harassment in STEMM releases new guidance on best practices for code of conduct policies.

As you know, the AMS is involved in a range of data-collection efforts that can help us understand the participation of women and underrepresented minorities in our discipline. The Mathematical and Statistical Sciences Annual Survey,¹² for example, reports on information collected from departments at four-year colleges and universities in the United States. This report includes gender and citizenship demographics on departmental hiring, faculty, course enrollments, degree recipients, and graduate students. The AMS is also advancing important smaller-scale efforts. For example, in the AMS Member Directory,¹³ we are inviting our members to consider sharing their personal demographic information. We explain, “This information helps us to ensure that participation in AMS programs, activities, governance, and volunteerism is diverse and inclusive. In aggregate, it will also be used in reporting our success in this effort to such groups as the AMS leadership and funding agencies.” Please consider logging into your AMS account to add any demographic information you are comfortable sharing. Although the AMS has not directly sought to collect data on sexual harassment and climate for women in mathematics, there is a growing body of data supporting its existence, including specifically in STEMM. For now, the AMS has no plans to collect harassment data specific to mathematics—the National Academies have sufficient data already demonstrating the problem.

Although we have further to go, I believe the climate for women in mathematics is improving. I am optimistic that as we become more aware and more intentional in our actions, we will make progress toward ending barriers people encounter in mathematics. Clear evidence shows that serious and thoughtful efforts by many members of the mathematics community have resulted in making the AMS and its programs more inclusive over time. Recently, the AMS Office of the Secretary undertook an internal study to better understand the participation of women in several categories: Society Leadership, the Editorial Boards Committee and the Nominating Committee, AMS Elections, Policy Committees, Editorial Committees, and Invited Addresses at AMS meetings. This study found increasing participation of women in many aspects of our governance and leadership, while also pointing out areas where we need to focus our energy. These statistics will be shared with the mathematics community in future issues of the *Notices of the AMS*.

All of this work—happening around the world, across the United States, and in hundreds of STEMM professional societies, including here at the AMS—speaks to a sincere effort to fundamentally change the culture of harassment. We see increasing awareness. We have the data. We are working to put policies and structures in place. All of this will help improve our culture—but it is not a panacea. Changing our culture will take tremendous effort and will take time. Working together, we can accelerate this transformation.



⁹<https://www.ams.org/about-us/governance/committees/comm-all.html>

¹⁰<https://www.ams.org/about-us/governance/policy-statements/sec-ams-policystatements>

¹¹<https://www.ams.org/about-us/governance/policy-statements/welcoming-environment-policy>

¹²<https://www.ams.org/profession/data/annual-survey/annual-survey>

¹³<https://www.ams.org>, log into the Member Directory, select My Account, and then select Demographics under Personal Information.