



## **Policy Objectives on Diversity in STEM**

*Suggestions from Stakeholder Groups to the D&I Caucus*

July 22, 2008

Dear Colleague:

You may know that 39 percent of the U.S. population under the age of 18 is a racial or ethnic minority. Yet, in 2000, only 4.4 percent of the science and engineering jobs in this country were held by African Americans and only 3.4 percent by Hispanics. At the university level, although women make up 60% of the undergraduate college population, only 20 percent of all bachelor's degrees granted in engineering and physics, and a decreasing share of bachelor's degrees in mathematics and computer science, are earned by women. This under-representation of minority groups in the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields is a severe impediment to our national competitiveness and the Diversity and Innovation Caucus invites you to join our efforts to close these gaps to ensure access to STEM fields for all Americans.

Responding to this issue, the Diversity and Innovation Caucus has acted to:

- Generate policies for increasing the participation of groups under-represented in the STEM fields;
- Communicate the importance of promoting diversity in STEM for the achievement of America's innovation and competitiveness goals; and
- Engage the stakeholder community in an effort to assess policy areas of greatest need regarding diversity and innovation.

The Diversity and Innovation Caucus turned to the STEM education and workforce community for guidance in shaping its policy agenda, going forward. This spring, the Caucus hosted a Stakeholders' Listening Meeting in the Members' Room of the Library of Congress. The goal of the meeting was to solicit feedback from women, minority, education, and STEM groups on public policy priorities for diversifying the STEM fields. Over 80 groups attended the meeting, and over 40 of the groups drafted a response to our call for policy recommendations. An analysis of stakeholder responses revealed common themes that we have refined into a set of policy objectives on diversity.

Attached you will find the principal themes that the stakeholder groups communicated as of utmost importance in our federal efforts to diversify the STEM workforce. We want to share this information with you. At the same time, we invite you to join the D&I Caucus. Show your support for this issue and join in our efforts for the remainder of this Congress, and going into the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress.

### **8-Point Policy Agenda**

## **Toward a More Diverse STEM Workforce**

The following policy recommendations represent over-arching themes based on feedback the Diversity and Innovation (D&I) Caucus has received from science, education, women, and minority stakeholder groups. The D&I Caucus supports these principal objectives to increase participation by under-represented groups in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM).

1. Support the recruitment, retention, and professional development of well-qualified STEM teachers in high-need schools, so that educators are better prepared for teaching students with limited English proficiency, girls, and other minority groups.
2. Ensure that students in high-need populations have access to a rigorous STEM curriculum, hands-on laboratory experiences, informal learning and other methods that increase interest and academic performance in STEM areas.
3. Ensure that all schools are identifying and mitigating gaps in student performance in STEM education.
4. Increase STEM academic and research capacity at Minority Serving Institutions.
5. Strengthen the STEM pipeline by including specific attention to the following:
  - Addressing obstacles to women and minority participation throughout the STEM workforce and pipeline (such as subtle institutional biases, a lack of adequate healthcare coverage, inflexibility of work hours, lack of dependent care options, etc.),
  - Insuring proper funding and coordinated oversight of existing federal programs focused on broadening participation in STEM, and
  - Improving the quality of life for post-doctoral candidates.
6. Strengthen and re-examine oversight of existing legislation aimed specifically at broadening participation by under-represented groups in STEM fields.
7. Support a systematic approach to changing the face of STEM careers in the public eye via policy that creates or strengthens:
  - Mentoring programs for women and minorities, and
  - A federal marketing campaign for STEM careers.
8. Support efforts to centralize, publicize, develop, and maintain a database of STEM organizations, research, scholarships, awards, programs, jobs, and best practices from federal and non-federal sources.

Sincerely,

/s/ Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Member of Congress

/s/ Vernon J. Ehlers  
Member of Congress

/s/ Michael M. Honda  
Member of Congress

/s/ Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress

/s/ G.K. Butterfield  
Member of Congress

/s/ Ruben Hinojosa  
Member of Congress

/s/ Silvestre Reyes  
Member of Congress

/s/ Lucille Roybal-Allard  
Member of Congress

/s/ Bobby L. Rush  
Member of Congress

/s/ Sheila Jackson-Lee  
Member of Congress

/s/ Donna M. Christensen  
Member of Congress

/s/ Charles A. Gonzalez  
Member of Congress