

From WinGRSS to IDEA: Thinking More Broadly About Diversity and Inclusion

Moving into 2020 marks a number of milestones (if only based on its simplified numerology). The beginning of a new year and a new decade is always a good opportunity for retrospection, especially when progress has been made and is underway. The year 2019 marked both the last year that the IEEE Geoscience and Remote Sensing Society (GRSS) Women in GRSS (WinGRSS) would be a committee on its own and the launch of the Inspire, Develop, Empower, Advance (IDEA) Committee (<http://www.grss-ieee.org/community/idea/>). WinGRSS has not gone away. Rather, it is now part of IDEA, which represents a broader and stronger mission of diversity and inclusion within the GRSS.

Diversity and inclusion initiatives are on the rise in academia, government, and industry and suggest a broader call to build organizations that embody the strengths of differences among their members. These programs focus on creating an inclusive and diverse environment encompassing a number of dimensions of diversity,

including gender/gender identity, race/ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, physical and mental ability, language, parental status, age, education, and more. A growing body of research is defining the value that diversity brings to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics disciplines and scientific progress as a whole, particularly with respect to innovation, excellence, talent, and long-term economic growth [1].

We are proud to take on the mission of expanding diversity and inclusion within the GRSS through the IDEA Committee. To celebrate our transition to IDEA,

we would like to take a moment to highlight some of our achievements and work in progress from 2019 and share our plans for making 2020 a special year of inspiring, developing, empowering, and advancing the best in all of us. As mentioned, WinGRSS is not gone but stronger than ever and growing, with updates and expansions planned for many of its flagship programs. Social media networking opportunities in LinkedIn and Facebook are still very active and expanding on Twitter @IEEEWinGRSS. In addition, the GRSS Women Mentoring Women program (Figure 1) is being revamped with new success stories from Dr. Qian Zhan (mentee) and Dr. Josée Levesque (mentor), support for associated travel grants, and other benefits. Prof. Alina Zare and Dr. Heather McNairn have done a great job of updating the signup process and pairing mentors with mentees during 2019. Also, those who are interested should keep an eye out for additional inspirational material coming in 2020.

New activities and improvements have also been introduced to WinGRSS activities at the annual IEEE International Geoscience and Remote Sensing Symposium (IGARSS) in recent years: in 2017, an improved Women in GRSS luncheon format was initiated, and new developments in the Women in GRSS forum were instituted, such as an expansion to include diverse perspectives regarding career paths in the GRSS from women of different technological and educational backgrounds. Finally, coordination with IEEE Women in Engineering (WIE) continues with the Inspiring Member of the Year, Inspiring Student Member of the Year, and Affinity Group of the Year awards, which empower GRSS members to encourage cross-society recognition for those peers who have made exceptional contributions. Additionally, the IDEA Committee continues to send women to the annual WIE International Leadership Conference, an incredible opportunity for those interested in developing valuable

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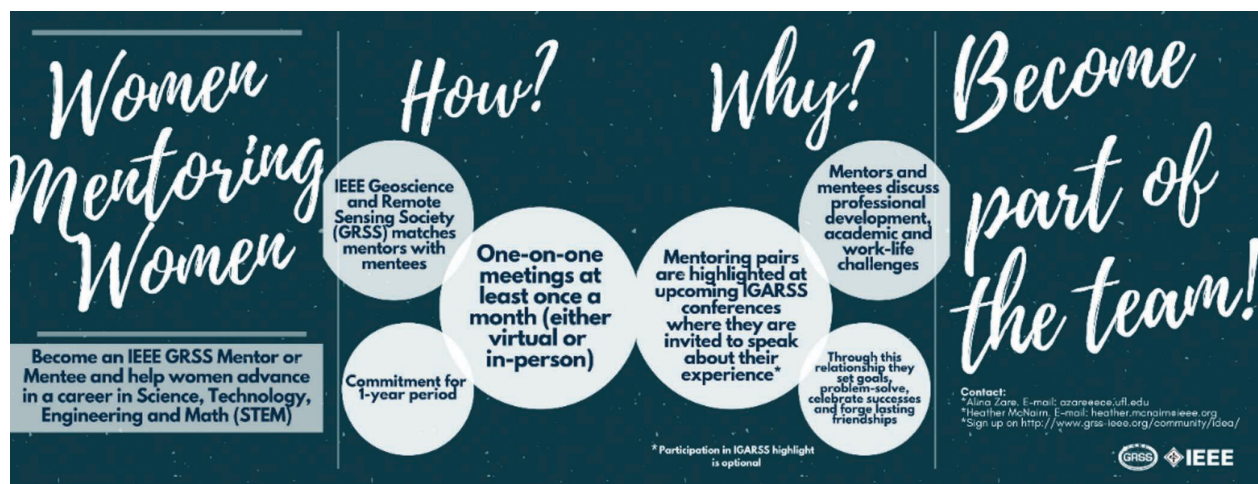


FIGURE 1. The new Women Mentoring Women explanatory flyer launched in 2019. These efforts were led by Prof. Alina Zare and Dr. Heather McNairn of the IEEE GRSS IDEA committee.

leadership skills. Check out the Twitter threads from our very own IDEA committee member Dr. Nkeiruka N. Onyia (@NNkeiru), who attended last year and shared some of her most inspiring moments.

Expanding our initiatives toward broader diversity and inclusion, Zare is leading the effort to create and implement an IGARSS official code of conduct and a professional parents' space. Headway was made going into the 2019 IGARSS in Japan on the full code of conduct, and we hope to have additional support for families of researchers put in place for the 2020 IGARSS in Hawaii. Would a dedicated child-care room at a top international scientific conference empower you to move forward with your professional career? Would subsidized child-care options provide just the opportunity you need to get ahead? Stay tuned!

Advancing intrasocietal diversity and inclusion, the IDEA committee has joined with social media ambassadors, Young Professionals Program leads, and others in reaching out, highlighting, and supporting the first ever regional IGARSS conferences coming up in Tunisia, Chile, and India this year. Women taking on roles in the local organizing committees were highlighted in a recent *IEEE Geoscience and Remote Sensing Magazine* column [2], and a new microgrants initiative was launched to provide financial support for women and other underrepresented groups from the local hosting country and neighboring countries for each regional conference: the 2020 Latin American GRSS/ISPRS Conference in Chile, 2020 Mediterranean and Middle-East GRSS in Tunisia, and 2020 India GRSS. If you haven't had a chance to submit to these conferences, please still consider attending and supporting your fellow GRSS colleagues and the remarkable efforts of the local

organizing committees toward the Society-wide goal of "a more inclusive GRSS" [3].

So, yes, we are moving forward to inspire, develop, empower, and advance all GRSS members with renewed efforts toward an even broader vision of diversity and inclusion. This is still a work in progress; we'd love to do it together and can definitely use your help. If you are also interested in celebrating, supporting, and thriving on our differences for the benefit of our members and the GRSS community, do let us know. For more information on these activities and others, please contact Shawn C. Kefauver (sckefauver@ieee.org), Keely Roth (keely.roth@ieee.org), or Mariko S. Burgin (mburgin@ieee.org).

WOULD A DEDICATED CHILD-CARE ROOM AT A TOP INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE EMPOWER YOU TO MOVE FORWARD WITH YOUR PROFESSIONAL CAREER?

REFERENCES

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