

## THE WOMEN'S PROGRAM COMMITTEE AT THE CfA

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics (CfA) is a large research complex including 687 people affiliated with the Astrophysical Observatory of the Smithsonian Institution, Harvard University, or the Harvard College Observatory. Located in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the CfA contains offices, computer laboratories, several telescopes, and engineering and laboratory facilities. The CfA also operates three observatories: Oak Ridge Observatory in Harvard, Massachusetts; F. L. Whipple Observatory in Amado, Arizona; and the Multiple Mirror Telescope Observatory in Tucson, Arizona (the latter operated jointly with the University of Arizona). Approximately one-third of the CfA staff are women, and about 14 percent of the 170 Ph.D. scientists at the CfA are women. (Women represent 12 percent of the American Astronomical Society membership.)

### 2. THE CfA WOMEN'S PROGRAM

The Women's Program at the CfA was founded in 1975 in accordance with guidelines supplied by the United States Civil Service Commission, which require that each federal agency provide a special emphasis program to address the concerns of women in the workplace. The Women's Program at the CfA represents the concerns of women to CfA management, provides programming for recruitment, retention, and development, participates in community outreach, maintains a liaison to the Smithsonian Institution Office of Equal Employment and Minority Affairs, and assists in the formulation and implementation of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory's Affirmative Action Plan. The Director of the CfA appoints the Coordinator of the Women's Program for a two-year term, and a Committee, elected by the CfA community, advises the Coordinator. The Women's Program Committee (WPC) membership reflects the range of professions and personalities at the CfA.

### 3. WPC PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

The diversity and size of the CfA challenge the WPC to design programs for all members of the community. The WPC must address the needs of computer programmers, secretaries, research scientists, administrators, technicians, students, editors, and others employed or appointed by the Smithsonian Institution or Harvard University. The WPC must critically examine the status of women at the CfA, identify areas in which women are underrepresented, develop potential explanations for apparent problems, and create programming to improve the status and representation of women at the CfA. In the next year, the WPC will work to:

- Create a workshop series designed to assist administrative, scientific, and technical staff in developing successful grant writing skills, delivering better scientific presentations, understanding administrative processes, and improving other practical skills.
- Establish a network of contacts at professional, administrative, and scientific organizations such as the American Association of University Women, American Women in Science, and science departments in colleges and universities to make these resources more accessible to the women of the CfA.
- Offer the Mentor Program, which provides guidance and support for new female employees, appointments, and graduate students by matching them with more established persons in similar professions and areas of study.
- Coordinate Space for Women: A Focus in the Physical Sciences, a day-long symposium for high school students which last year included four panel discussions which explored the excitement and challenge of scientific research, discussed integrating a scientific career with a family, described the education required for a career in science, and suggested methods for finding mentors and accessing other science resources. Space for Women also included two presentations, one a comprehensive review of CfA research and the other a slide presentation on the history of women astronomers at the CfA. The program gave the students an opportunity not only to discover the diversity of people and science at the Center for Astrophysics, but also to meet with representatives of Sky and Telescope and the Amateur Telescope Makers.
- Continue to maintain bulletin boards for job postings and information from the Director's Office and to act as a referral service for women who need information about CfA policies, procedures, and programs.

More information on these or any of the other programs offered by the Women's Program at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, is available from Kathleen Entler, Women's Program Coordinator, at 60 Garden Street, MS 72, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02138, (617) 495-7341.

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