
COMMITMENT TO HUMAN DIVERSITY IN ECOLOGY AWARD

The Commitment to Human Diversity in Ecology Award provides recognition of long-standing contributions of an individual toward increasing the diversity of future ecologists through mentoring, teaching, or outreach. The awardee for 2013 is Dr. Sonia Ortega of the National Science Foundation.

For 34 years, all aspects of Dr. Ortega's life's work embody the spirit of this ESA Diversity Award. She has been a key player in leading programs, partnerships, mentoring innovations, educational outreach, and funding innovations for increasing diversity of ecologists. Highlights of her work include:

- a founding member of the first ESA Committee for Women and Minorities, and a major contributor to the planning of programs to increase the diversity of ecologists in ESA;
- part of the ESA leadership in the development of the SEEDS program (Strategies for Ecology Education, Diversity and Sustainability), an education program designed to diversify and advance ecology through opportunities that stimulate and nurture the interest of underrepresented students;
- led ESA's Committee for the Next Generation, engaging the graduate students at ESA in the discussion needed to move the society forward to meet the needs of future ecologists in the next 100 years;
- spearheaded, organized, or supervised similar STEM pipeline development programs for the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science and for the National Science Foundation;
- SACNAS honored her in 2008 with the Mentor Award for her 20 years of work leading the development and enhancement of SACNAS mentoring programs;
- directs NSF programs that fund educational outreach to minorities in science, and has led the way in explaining and upholding the importance of demonstrating the "broader impacts" aspect of NSF grants, and in providing a diverse panel of scientists to review grant proposals. Her work has enhanced the diversity of students, teachers, and mentors impacted by those programs, and also led to greater recognition of the importance of human diversity in studying the natural sciences.



Dr. Ortega is a leader in the development of diversity-enhancing programs within ESA, while broadening the base of supporters for improving diversity of scientists in all STEM fields. Her liaison work to other professional societies, her talks and guidance for a broad range of scientific conference events, and her promotion of diversity in her work at NSF are clear examples of the impact she has had for decades in improving diversity of STEM membership, and of ecologists. We are all indebted to her in inspiring us to keep working to improve diversity of scientists in all fields, and especially in ecology.