



POSITION STATEMENT

Workforce Diversity in STEM Fields

*Adopted by the IEEE-USA
Board of Directors (26 June 2009)*

IEEE-USA is committed to achieving greater diversity and inclusiveness for talented people - irrespective of differences in their age, sex, cultural heritage, ethnic background, national origin, physical capability or religious affiliation - in America's scientific, technical, engineering and mathematics (STEM) workforce. Only by harnessing these differences and the creativity they engender, can U.S. business organizations, educational institutions, government agencies and professional societies succeed in maintaining America's living standards and quality of life in an increasingly competitive, technologically-driven 21st Century economy.

IEEE-USA strongly supports greater public, private and cooperative efforts to promote more diverse and inclusive opportunities for aspiring and incumbent workers with degrees in scientific, technical, engineering and math (STEM) fields by:

- Strengthening the teaching of math and science in the nation's elementary and secondary schools
- Encouraging more women, minorities, disabled, disadvantaged and older Americans to view the STEM professions as a viable and rewarding career choice
- Bolstering mentoring, career counseling and other vocational support services for gifted and talented pre-college, community college and university students
- Accommodating those who need to take time away from their careers to raise a family and who need pathways to enable their return
- Implementing objective, performance- and results-oriented recruitment, hiring, compensation, staff development, promotion and retention strategies
- Recognizing and rewarding the value of experience and investing in lifelong learning opportunities for STEM professionals
- Improving job opportunities for those who have been disadvantaged by socioeconomic status, affordability of training, or who have been out of the work force for extended periods of time
- Disclaiming any preference, limitation, specification, or discrimination in employment that can be construed to be related to an employee's age, race, sex or national origin.
- Ensuring opportunities for older workers who wish to continue their careers, and accommodating those who opt for phased retirement, job-sharing, or other non-traditional ways of working.

This statement was developed by the IEEE-USA Career and Workforce Policy Committee and represents the considered judgment of a group of U.S. IEEE members with expertise in the subject field. IEEE-USA advances the public good and promotes the careers and public policy interests of more than 210,000 engineers, scientists and allied professionals who are U.S. members of IEEE. The positions taken by IEEE-USA do not necessarily reflect the views of IEEE or its other organizational units.

Background

As illustrated by 2007 U.S. Census data(1), the engineering profession in the United States continues to lag other sectors in employing women and under-represented minorities:

Gender	Male	Female
All Workers	53.7%	46.3%
All STEM	74.3%	25.7%
All Engineers	88.5%	11.5%

Ethnicity	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Other
All Workers	76.7%	11.8%	5.8%	4.8%	1.0%
All STEM	78.4%	6.4%	1.8%	12.7%	0.7%
All Engineers	81.7%	4.7%	1.8%	11.4%	0.5%

The engineering professional will need to increasingly draw on currently underrepresented segments of our population to fill the projected workforce needs of the future. In our increasingly diverse society, a more diverse engineering workforce will also help fuel innovation and promote U.S. economic competitiveness.

In recent years, greater workforce diversity and inclusiveness has come to mean much more than simple compliance with affirmative action requirements intended to promote to equal employment opportunities for women and minorities. The operative meaning of diversity has become much more encompassing. As the President of Carolina Light and Power has described it, “diversity means maximizing the capabilities of all of our employees by establishing and maintaining an environment of respect, acceptance, understanding and open communication in order to create and sustain a more productive workforce and greater competitive advantage for our company.” (2)

In order to grow and compete successfully around the world, companies have made workforce diversity a cornerstone of their human resources strategy and an essential part of how they attract, retain, promote and compensate talent. As stated by Morgan Stanley, “diversity is not a burdensome legal obligation, it’s an unparalleled opportunity to add value, increase revenues and grow the company.” (3)

Notes

1. U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey (2008). See on-line at: <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>
2. Remarks of William Cavanaugh, President and CEO of Carolina Power & Light, delivered to the American Association of Blacks in Energy 23rd National Conference, Atlanta, Georgia, March 3, 2000. See on-line at: <http://www.allbusiness.com/sector-55-management-companies-enterprises/697806-1.html>
3. David C. Forman, "The Business Case for Workforce Diversity," Nov 2006. See on-line at: http://www.talentmgt.com/recruitment_retention/2006/November/191/index.php