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SWE Earns \$5 Million National Science Foundation Grant to Fund the Women of Color in Engineering Collaborative

Diverse Group of Grant Team includes SHPE, NSBE, AISES, and WEPAN

(October 2, 2023—Chicago)—The Society of Women Engineers has been awarded a nearly \$5 million grant from the National Science Foundation to fund [the Women of Color in Engineering Collaborative \(WCEC\)](#)—a project that seeks to address the impact of retaining women of color in the engineering profession.

SWE is joined in the collaboration by the National Society of Black Engineers (co-principal investigator Rochelle Williams), Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (co-PI Dayna Martínez), American Indian Science and Engineering Society (co-PI Tiffany Smith), and Women in Engineering ProActive Network (co-PI Stephani Page).



“This award is a testament to the amazing efforts of the Women of Color in Engineering Collaborative’s member organizations,” said Roberta Rincon, associate director of research at SWE and PI for the grant. “With the planning grant that NSF awarded us in 2020, we developed strong partnerships and a sound strategic plan to guide the WCEC’s work in the coming years. We are excited to begin implementing the strategies to address the unique challenges that women of color face in the engineering workforce.”

The grant is made possible through the NSF INCLUDES (Inclusion across the Nation of Communities of Learners of Underrepresented Discoverers in Engineering and Science) program. Aligning with the NSF INCLUDES program’s goal to advance equity and sustain systemic change to broaden participation in STEM, the WCEC aims to increase the diversity of the engineering workforce at the intersections of gender and race by improving the retention of women of color.

“Professional STEM societies, academic institutions, and employers have developed numerous programs and services for women engineers and engineers of color, but women of color engineers are often left underserved by these efforts,” Rincon said.

According to Rincon, women of color comprise less than 6% of engineering professionals. Research shows women leave the profession at higher rates than men, highlighting real-world experiences of bias and discrimination in hiring, promotion, and compensation decisions, which have particularly dire consequences for women of color.

“SWE has increased its focus on addressing the challenges that women engineers of color face,” said Karen Horting, SWE’s Executive Director and CEO. “We are excited to continue the work of the WCEC

and grow a network of support to increase the retention and advancement of women engineers of color. Together, we will make real progress towards our DEIB goals.”

Seeking to increase the retention of women of color in the engineering profession, the WCEC will share case studies of promising practices with member organizations, support women of color in their pursuit of professional development opportunities and increase access and exposure of existing programs and services to women engineers of color and the organizations with which they engage.

The WCEC will expand from its current membership of 29 organizations to include more partners from industry, government, higher education, and professional STEM societies to create a support system that systematically impacts women’s transition from college to career to promotion through their networks in higher education and the public and private sectors.

About SWE

The Society of Women Engineers (SWE), founded in 1950, is the world’s largest advocate and catalyst for change for women in engineering and technology. The not-for-profit educational and service organization is the driving force that establishes engineering as a highly desirable career aspiration for women. To ensure SWE members reach their full potential as engineers and leaders, the Society offers unique opportunities to network, provides professional development, shapes public policy and provides recognition for the life-changing contributions and achievements of women engineers. As a champion of diversity, SWE empowers women to succeed and advance in their personal and professional lives. For more information about the Society, please visit www.swe.org or call 312.596.5223.