



2010-01-25: 2010 Recognition Awards to Keasling, Bering, and Riley

NOGLSTP is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2010 Recognition Award for Outstanding GLBT Engineer, Scientist, and Educator of the Year: Jay Keasling, Jesse Michel Bering, and Donna Riley. These awards will be presented at our Annual Recognition Awards Reception on Sunday February 21, 2010 at the San Diego Marriot Hotel, during the AAAS Annual Meeting. All interested people are welcome to attend.

The GLBT Engineer of the Year award goes to **Dr. Jay Keasling**, Hubbard Howe Jr. Distinguished Professor of Biochemical Engineering at UC Berkeley's Department of Chemical Engineering and Bioengineering. Dr. Keasling's research involves synthetic biology, systems biology, environmental biotechnology, and bioenergy solutions using metabolic engineering of microorganisms. One specific example of Keasling's research involves the metabolic engineering of the *Escherichia coli* bacterium, to produce the anti-malarial drug artemisinin. Although artemisinin is an effective, proven treatment for malaria, current methods of producing it from the plant *Artemisia annua* are considered too expensive to cost-effectively eliminate malaria from developing countries. By producing the drug from a microbe, rather than harvesting it from a plantation, the Keasling Lab intends to lower the cost of artemisinin production from \$2.40 per dose to \$0.25 per dose.

The GLBT Scientist of the Year award goes to **Dr. Jesse Michael Bering**, Reader at the School of History and Anthropology, and Director of the Institute of Cognition and Culture at Queen's University, Belfast. His post graduate research focused on the psychological differences between human beings and chimpanzees, and this early exposure to comparative psychology, combined with his PhD in developmental psychology, led to his work studying how the evolved human mind plays a part in religious thinking. He is the author of numerous scientific articles on topics ranging from the afterlife to university students' conceptions of destiny. His popular writings have appeared in *American Scientist*, *Scientific American* and *New Statesman*, and he has had several essays published in John Brockman's *Edge*-derived books. He also writes a regular column called "Bering in Mind" for *Scientific American* magazine. An American

by birth, he currently lives in Northern Ireland with his partner Juan. His first book *Under God's Skin* is forthcoming from W.W. Norton in Spring, 2010.

The GLBTA Educator of the Year award, reserved for the GLBTA Educator who has enabled significant growth for GLBT students in science or technology – through teaching, counseling, advocacy, role modeling, or other educational roles, goes to **Dr. Donna Riley**, Associate Professor of Engineering at Smith College. Dr. Riley is a founding faculty member in the Picker Engineering Program at Smith College and an out bisexual woman who has been active in LGBT political movements for 19 years. Smith College has a history of being a lesbian and bi-friendly campus, often recognized in the *Advocate* magazine's list of LGBT-friendly colleges. More recently, transgender students at Smith and queer students of color at Smith have organized to expand the tradition of inclusivity and affirmation. Smith is the first women's college in the country to offer a degree in engineering.

In addition to serving as a role model for queer engineers on campus, Dr. Riley also works to include a focus on LGBT issues in her scholarship. She wrote an article in a special diversity issue of the journal *Leadership and Management in Engineering* introducing LGBT issues for practitioners and identifying ways to make workplaces more LGBT-friendly. In behind-the-scenes ways in her editorial work and professional service, Dr. Riley works to promote scholarship in engineering education that includes a focus on LGBT students and cultures of heterosexism and homo-, bi-, and transphobia. Often such work has difficulty finding a home because the field of engineering education has yet to recognize and respond to what gender studies scholars call "intersectionality" – the reality that people hold multiple identities at once as people with gender identities, races and ethnicities, abilities, sexual orientations, and social class, among others. Thus LGBT articles can be lost in a shuffle that seeks to categorize articles as either about "women in engineering" or about "minorities in engineering." In her book *Engineering and Social Justice* (Morgan and Claypool, 2008), Riley includes a section on Homophobia and Heterosexism in engineering, and refers throughout the book to LGBT issues including same-sex marriage, heteronormativity in engineering textbooks, and LGBT activism in a number of contexts. Dr. Riley is out in articles on her experiences as a woman in engineering as well as in work on engineering education. In her teaching, Dr. Riley employs liberative pedagogies – that is, feminist, critical, and queer pedagogies that seek to empower students as scholars and as whole people by turning a focus to power relations in the classroom, as well as in the larger world.

Congratulations to all!