



## 2021-03-15: Announcing 2021 Recognition Award Winners Ott, Díaz-Fañás, Romano, and Cherniak

PRESS RELEASE

“LGBTQ+ Scientist, Engineer, and Educator of the Year Awarded”

LGBTQ+ STEM professionals recognized for outstanding accomplishments in their field.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Announcing 2021 Recognition Award Winners Ott, Díaz-Fañás, Romano, and Cherniak

Pasadena, CA, March 15 — NOGLSTP is proud to announce the winners of its 2021 recognition awards for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) professionals in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). NOGLSTP has been recognizing exemplary individuals with LGBTQ+ Educator, Engineer, and Scientist of the year awards for over 15 years. NOGLSTP is also awarding its Walt Westman Award for outstanding contribution to its mission to support LGBTQ+ people in STEM.

### **2021 LGBTQ+ Educator of the Year: Miles Ott, Ph.D.**



The LGBTQ+ Educator of the Year award recognizes an educator who has significantly

impacted STEM students through teaching, counseling, advocacy, and role modeling. Dr. Ott is an Assistant Professor of Statistical and Data Sciences at Smith College. His research focuses on the statistical analysis of social network data, network sampling methodologies, and the statistical implications of missing data in social networks. Ott applies these methods to the areas of substance abuse in emerging adults, HIV surveillance in hard-to-reach populations, and LGBTQ+ health.

In addition to inspiring students in the classroom, Prof. Ott serves as a research mentor and advisor. He has supervised independent projects, many of which are resulting in publications including mental health in transgender individuals as well as social network analyses to examine how positive health behaviors can proliferate through social connections. These research themes allow Ott to engage with LGBTQ+ students and fellow educators. He shares his teaching and personal experiences as a trans person in academia openly through his blog ([milesott.com](http://milesott.com)).

Prof. Ott's impact on students both academically and personally was a powerfully moving theme in his letters of support. One student noted "as a professor he goes above and beyond to engage and delight his students into exploring new subjects... as a mentor and friend, he is encouraging and warm, always willing to offer a listening ear". Another student stated, "he has supported so many other queer and transgender students, because he knows how difficult it is for many of us to find the kind of acceptance and encouragement necessary to succeed in STEM."

When asked what advice he would give future LGBTQ+ STEM individuals, it is: "Your environment is tremendously important for your success. Look for mentors and colleagues who see you as a whole person and not just as a collection of accomplishments. The work it takes to find the right environment is always worth it. When you get the chance, be the supportive colleague or mentor that helps someone else do their best work."

**2021 LGBTQ+ Engineer of the Year: Guillermo Díaz-Fañás, M.S., P.E.**



The LGBTQ+ Engineer of the Year Award recognizes someone who has made outstanding contributions to their field, and recognizes the awardee for sustained contributions in design, production, management, or research. Guillermo Díaz-Fañás is an Infrastructure Climate Consultant at the Public-Private Infrastructure Advisory Facility (PPIAF) in the World Bank. In this role, Guillermo works with PPIAF grantees to introduce climate resilience and environmental sustainability in the policy and planning of private participation in infrastructure.

Díaz-Fañás was born in the Dominican Republic and moved to the U.S. for graduate school. Prior to joining PPIAF, he spent over ten years managing large infrastructure projects and leading climate and multi-hazard disaster resilience assessments. Díaz-Fañás is a recognized leader in earthquake and geotechnical engineering; he has published over 30 scientific articles and conference abstracts on the subject.

He has received numerous recognitions and awards for his contributions to the engineering community, including being the first openly gay individual to be awarded the New Faces of Civil Engineering title by the American Society of Civil Engineering (ASCE) in 2018. Other recognitions include 2020 Crain's NY Notable LGBTQ Leaders and Executives, 2020 Earthquake Engineering Research Institute (EERI) Younger Member Award, 2019 ASCE Met Section Younger Member Award, 2019 ENR New York Top 20 under 40. In addition to his professional impact, NOGLSTP recognizes Díaz-Fañás's work in increasing diversity and inclusion in civil engineering. One of these efforts is the founding of the national non-profit Queer Advocacy and Knowledge Exchange (Qu-AKE), an inclusive network for LGBTQ+ individuals pursuing careers infrastructure consulting, construction and design.

When asked about the scientific and social justice issues that keep him up at night, Díaz-Fañás did not hesitate in listing his three passions—climate change, geophysical hazards, and intersectionality. His disaster relief work drives efforts to “include sustainable building practices to tackle the challenges of global climate change.” Working on diversity, inclusion and equity initiatives in ASCE, EERI and the Deep Foundations Institute, as well as starting Qu-AKE have taught him “that we should celebrate the intersectionality of people and not focus on organizing them into layers or silos. There is a lot more to be done to ensure we can hear from those that currently do not have a voice.”

**2021 LGBTQ+ Scientist of the Year: Joseph Romano, Ph.D.**



The LGBTQ+ Scientist of the Year Award recognizes an individual who has made outstanding contributions to their field through design, research, or management. This year's award winner is Dr. Joseph Romano, Professor of Statistics and Economics at Stanford University. Romano is a pre-eminent scholar in Statistics and Econometrics. He has published over 100 peer-reviewed publications in the areas of resampling, computer-intensive methods for nonparametric inference, and multiple hypothesis testing. These publications, along with three co-authored books, have impacted fields ranging from econometrics to climate science.

Romano has developed many new statistical tools, such as subsampling and the stationary bootstrap. The breadth and importance of Romano's work are described in his letters of support, submitted by scholars across the United States and Europe. One letter notes that Romano has "made fundamental, indeed path-breaking, contributions to several distinct areas of statistics." Another that he "pioneered novel uses of randomization tests...(leading to) a renewed interest in their use in economics." These sentiments are shared by both the International Association of Applied Econometrics and the Institute of Mathematical Statistics, where he is an Elected Fellow.

In addition to his scholarly contributions, Romano is a celebrated educator and advocate for all students. His letter writers note Romano, an open and out gay male, has been an inspiration to many LGBTQ+ students at Stanford. "Joe is extremely caring, and he is always keenly aware of his ability to be a positive influence for LGBTQ+ scientists. His stature enables him to act as an ambassador for them."

His advice for the next generation of LGBTQ+ STEM professionals? "Enjoy the process, life is continually learning, and you are always evolving. Be authentic, patient, and stay in the moment."

**2021 Walt Westman Award: Daniele Cherniak, Ph.D.**



The Walt Westman Award is the highest national award given by NOGLSTP. The 2021 award recognizes the unselfish and outstanding contributions of Dr. Daniele Cherniak, who has served as NOGLSTP Bulletin editor for ten consecutive years. During her time as the voice of the organization, Cherniak worked diligently to develop an efficient and professional means of communicating with the membership.

Cherniak is a Senior Research Scientist in the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. She earned her Ph.D. in physics from SUNY Albany. She has since crossed disciplines where she focuses on geochemistry, specifically the characterization of atomic diffusion in rock-forming minerals. In this work, she employs the accelerator-based ion beam techniques Rutherford Backscattering Spectroscopy and Nuclear Reaction Analysis to measure diffusion profiles on the submicron scale, focusing on optimizing experimental and analytical techniques to measure the very slow diffusivities characteristic of many species in these materials. These data have application in a variety of fields, including studies of the early Earth, evolution of the Earth and extraterrestrial planets, and changes in chemical environments over time.

The Board of Directors commended Cherniak, who has served as a model for others and the organization as an out LGBTQ+ professional. She acknowledges that working as an academic researcher has changed during her career as “people are more open to diversity, and the environment is more welcome to women and LGBTQ+ contributions.” When asked what advice she has for future LGBTQ+ individuals pursuing STEM, her advice is true to her character. “Follow your interests, and don’t be afraid to be yourself.”

The winners will be invited to an awards ceremony later this year.

#### About NOGLSTP

NOGLSTP was established in 1980, incorporated in the state of California in 1991, and

was granted IRS 501 (c) 3 nonprofit status in 1992. NOGLSTP is a professional society that educates and advocates for LGBTQ people in STEM. NOGLSTP presents educational symposia and workshops nationwide and fosters dialog with other professional societies, academia, and industry to facilitate diversity and inclusion in the workplace. NOGLSTP is an affiliate of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, is a participating professional society member of MentorNet®, a sustaining member of the National Postdoctoral Association, a member of the Gay and Lesbian Leadership Institute's Presidential Advisory Project's Coalition, a partner with the Higher Education Recruitment Consortium, a partner of the Society for Women Engineers, a sustaining partner of the National Postdoctoral Association, and a founding member of the E-Week Diversity Council. For more information, visit the website at [www.noglstp.org](http://www.noglstp.org) or contact [scholarships@noglstp.org](mailto:scholarships@noglstp.org).

**Out to Innovate™ is:**

a professional society and global community of LGBTQ+ students and professionals in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.