



National Organization of Gay and Lesbian Scientists and Technical Professionals dba Out to Innovate
PO Box 91803, Pasadena CA 91109
outtoinnovate.org

2022-05-02: Out To Innovate Awards 2022 Scientist, Engineer, and Educator of the Year to Rigby, Fram, and Leyva

PRESS RELEASE

“Out To Innovate Awards 2022 Scientist, Engineer, and Educator of the Year”

Recognition awards for outstanding achievement by LGBTQ+ people in STEM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Out To Innovate Awards 2022 Scientist, Engineer, and Educator of the Year to Rigby, Fram, and Leyva

Pasadena, CA, May 2, 2022

Summary:

Out to Innovate is proud to announce the winners of its 2022 recognition awards for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) professionals in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). Out to Innovate has recognized exemplary individuals with LGBTQ+ Educator, Engineer, and Scientist of the year for over 15 years. These awards were initiated by the National Organization of Gay and Lesbian Scientists and Professionals (NOGLSTP), which officially became Out to Innovate in 2021. Out To Innovate will recognize these awardees in an online Awards Ceremony on May 28.

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Full Story:



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2022 LGBTQ+ Educator of the Year: Dr. Luis Leyva



The LGBTQ+ Educator of the Year award recognizes an educator who has significantly impacted STEM students through teaching, counseling, advocacy, and role modeling. Dr. Luis Leyva is an Assistant Professor of Mathematics Education in the Department of Teaching and Learning in the Peabody College of Education and Human Development at Vanderbilt University. He is an affiliate faculty in the Department for Gender & Sexuality Studies and a core faculty member in the Vanderbilt LGBT Policy Lab. His research explores narratives of oppression and resistance from historically marginalized student populations in undergraduate STEM across intersections of racial, gender, and sexual identities. Dr. Leyva's research aims to inform the development of educational practices that expand equitable learning opportunities and promote underrepresented populations' persistence in STEM.

Dr. Leyva leads a thriving research program as the director of the Power, Resistance, & Identity in STEM Education (PRISM) at Vanderbilt University. PRISM is an intergenerational lab advancing intersectional justice in STEM higher education. One of the PRISM Lab's research projects, Black & Latinx Queer Students in STEM, is a multi-institutional study of undergraduate Black and Latinx LGBTQ+ students' experiences as STEM majors across historically white and minority-serving institutions. By capturing the perspectives of LGBTQ students of color in STEM higher education research, this project is making important contributions in disrupting this intersectional silence.

Dr. Leyva's desire to empower others in the classroom and beyond was born from a role that he often assumed during peer study groups as an undergraduate STEM student at Rutgers University. The satisfaction of helping others and building community for STEM success led Dr. Leyva to become a K-12 mathematics teacher and work in various STEM enrichment programs for underrepresented first-year college students (e.g., STEP Summer Bridge, Upward Bound Math-Science). These opportunities, coupled with Dr. Leyva's lived experience as a Latinx queer STEM major, exposed him to the pervasive structural inequities and social marginalization in STEM education during a student's formative years.



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Dr. Leyva's continued impact on his mentees, colleagues, and the broader research community was reflected in his strong letters of support and nomination. One colleague noted, "...in addition to his brilliant scholarship on these topics, Dr. Leyva has also exhibited an unwavering commitment to advocacy and inclusion here at Vanderbilt for marginalized queer communities." A mentee also noted that he "demonstrates humanizing and empowering support for LGBTQ+ students in STEM that has changed my understanding of what mentorship can be."

2022 LGBTQ+ Engineer of the Year: Lt. Col. Bree Fram



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. Lt. Col. Bree Fram has been an active service member since 2003 and is currently in the United States Space Force. Fram is currently responsible for developing the policies used by the Space Force to develop, build, test, and deliver critical joint warfighting capabilities as the Deputy Division Chief for Acquisition Policies and Processes supporting the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for

Space Acquisition and Integration.

Prior to commissioning in the Air Force, Fram completed her degree in Aerospace Engineering from the University of Minnesota. She encourages everyone to consider a career in engineering as it "...opens up such a world of career possibilities because, at its heart, engineering teaches logic and problem-solving. In particular, we need more LGBTQ+ engineers and the unique perspectives they bring to help solve our most difficult problems." She said that being an engineer in the military is a great option to "develop skills, be given incredible responsibility and opportunity, and to defend the values we Americans care about so deeply."

Lt. Col. Fram came out as transgender in 2016, the day the transgender ban was dropped in the military. She is also the highest-ranking out active-duty transgender officer in the Department of Defense. Fram is currently president of SPARTA, a transgender military advocacy organization dedicated to the support and



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professional development of over 1400 transgender service members. A member of SPARTA since 2014, one letter of support noted Fram played a critical role in the Department of Defense allowing authentic service by transgender service members: “Without Bree’s experience in legislative affairs, organization and interpersonal skills, we would not have been able to rally both Senators and Members of the House of Representatives in support of open transgender service.”

The advice she would give her younger self: “open your eyes and heart as wide as they possibly can go. When I came out and transitioned, it was if blinders fell away from my eyes, and a world of empathy and connection that I was missing opened up to me.” Her lived experiences and being true to herself has “made [her] a better leader, ally, and advocate for not just for the LGBTQ+ community but all minority and intersectional identities.”

2022 LGBTQ+ Scientist of the Year: Dr. Jane Rigby



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. Jane Rigby, an astrophysicist at the NASA Goddard Flight Center and the Operations Project Scientist for NASA’s James Webb Space Telescope. Rigby earned degrees in both Physics and Astronomy and Astrophysics at The Pennsylvania State University and her Ph.D. in astronomy from the University of Arizona. Rigby

develops new techniques to study galaxy evolution, star-forming galaxies, and active galactic nuclei.

In addition to her work with the James Webb Space Telescope, Rigby and her team at NASA, with international collaborators, have led many successful research campaigns, collecting data from the Keck and Magellan Observatories and the Hubble Space Telescope. She has published over 100 peer-reviewed publications. She also has given countless professional and public presentations on her research and on the James Webb Space Telescope. Rigby has been recognized for her research, mentorship, and diversity-related work with awards such as the John C. Lindsay Memorial Award for Space Science and served on the 2020 Decadal Survey of Astronomy and Astrophysics for the National Academies.



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Rigby serves as a trustee of the American Astronomical Society (AAS) and was a founding member of the AAS Committee for Sexual-Orientation and Gender Minorities in Astronomy. One letter of support noted that they “especially admire Jane’s unwavering stand that she is a *better* astronomer because she is queer...because of the leadership training she received as a LGBT activist, and because of the resilience she has developed by surviving as an LGBT person.”

When asked what advice she has for future LGBTQ+ scientists interested in research in this world and beyond, she offered: “Do fabulous science, be fabulous, and be kind.”