

Speaker Bios

Diversity Meeting #7

June 30, 2021

Ms. Kris Brown, serves as Deputy Associate Administrator for the Office of STEM Engagement, providing leadership of NASA's STEM Engagement function, devoted to creating unique learning opportunities for students and supporting educators and educational institutions. Kris began her career 30 years ago as an engineer at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, dedicating much of her career to work on flight programs and as a leader in engineering. As a result, she brings unique perspectives as a STEM practitioner to her position, coupled with a strong commitment and passion for inspiring and engaging young people to pursue STEM education and careers. Immediately prior to her current role, Kris led an agency team to define a new vision and direction for NASA's endeavors in public and STEM engagement, creating the roadmap for the agency's future work in this realm. Previously, Kris served as a key member of the NASA Office of Communications' leadership team, as the architect of a transformation effort toward more effectively engaging people around the globe in NASA's mission and work. Previously, Kris served as NASA Goddard's Special Assistant for Strategy and Development, leading a diverse set of initiatives. Throughout her career in engineering, Kris led efforts devoted to advancing the state-of-the-art in practice and capabilities. Earlier, she served in organizational and project leadership positions in systems engineering and mechanical systems. Kris has been awarded NASA's Medal for Outstanding Leadership and Medal for Exceptional Service. Kris earned a bachelor's degree in engineering from Virginia Tech. Having grown up in a small, rural town in Pennsylvania and as the first person in her family to attend college, Kris learned firsthand, the power of education and its potential in propelling people on paths toward fulfilled lives. She is thrilled in her role to be part of shaping the lives of our nation's students and enabling them to discover and forge STEM pathways.

Mr. Richard (Rick) Gilmore, serves as the Performance Assessment and Evaluation Program Manager for NASA's Office of STEM Engagement (OSTEM). He oversees the management and execution of an integrated performance assessment strategy, evaluation strategy, and learning agenda (evidence plan) to build and use knowledge about project and operational performance for evidence-based decision-making and continual improvement. Rick also leads a dedicated team in the strategic planning, design and execution of major educational research studies for OSTEM investments. Rick has over eighteen combined years of experience as a civil servant and support service contractor working at NASA in capacities involving Agency and Center project management support, performance measurement, evaluation, learning agenda, strategic communications and partnership/collaboration development. Rick received his Master of Education Degree in Evaluation and Measurement from Kent State University and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Chemical Engineering from Carnegie Mellon University.

Ms. Elaine Ho, Elaine Ho serves as the Deputy Associate Administrator for the STEM Engagement Program at NASA Headquarters, leading and managing the multi-million dollar portfolio of STEM Engagement projects that benefit students, universities and educational institutions. Elaine has a long history of public service as an Air Force officer, criminal prosecutor, and senior executive in the federal government. Elaine also is an expert in diversity, equity and inclusion issues, and has held a number of positions in the White House, including Senior Policy Advisor for Michelle Obama's Let Girls Learn initiative and Chief of Staff of the United States Digital Service.

Mr. Torry A. Johnson, is the Manager for the Minority University Research and Education Project within NASA's Office of STEM Engagement. There he engages underrepresented, underserved communities about STEM opportunities at conferences, competitions, & workshops around the country. Torry is focused on developing strategic partnerships that lead to institutional capacity building, competitiveness and overall student success at Minority Serving Institutions. For 15+ years Torry worked at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center. As an Assistant Deputy Director within the Earth Science Division, his purview extended to multiple, research-based agreements and contracts, office space & technical facilities, education & public outreach and broad information technology efforts. Torry was appointed and served as an organizational Ombudsman to aide colleagues with conflict resolution, mediation and problem solving. Before joining the federal government, Torry worked for companies like Allstate, USA Today and the TriZetto Group. Outside of the office, Torry is a board member for a non-profit focused on developing low-income housing for seniors and supports multiple community-based organizations with academic consulting and leadership development. Torry received his bachelor's degree from Syracuse University and his master's degree from the University of Maryland, College Park.

Mr. Louie Lopez, is the Director of the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) in the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense in Research and Engineering's (OUSD/R&E), Laboratories and Personnel. Mr. Lopez is responsible for the management and execution of the Department of Defense (DoD) K through Graduate STEM efforts under the National Defense Education Program (NDEP). His responsibilities include the Science Mathematics and Research Transformation (SMART) scholarship, Manufacturing Engineering Education Program, and STEM education and outreach initiatives under the Defense STEM Education Consortium (DSEC) cooperative agreement award in collaboration with partners from academia, industry, and other community organizations with a shared mission in STEM. He serves on a variety of Federal interagency working groups, as well as an alternate under the Federal Coordination of STEM Education. He is also responsible for policy and coordination of STEM efforts across the Department to ensure alignment with DoD and Federal STEM Strategic plans. Previously he worked for the Army managing their K – College STEM programs under the Army Educational Outreach Program, and prior to government service, he worked on pre-college STEM education programs at California State University at Fresno, and before that, at Fullerton. He also taught computer science courses at California State University at Fullerton.

Ms. Brenda Manuel, having held numerous positions during her career with NASA, served as the Associate Administrator for the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity (ODEO) from 2006 to 2016, with responsibility for developing and directing the agency's equal opportunity, civil rights compliance and diversity strategies programs and processes. During her tenure as NASA's AA for ODEO, Ms. Manuel led the development and implementation of multifaceted, comprehensive and proactive agency wide programs and initiatives such as the Conflict Management Program, Anti-Harassment Program and NASA's Diversity and Inclusion Framework. Ms. Manuel's full-fledged external civil rights compliance program for over 300 NASA grantee institutions resulted in the MissionSTEM website to reach grant recipients and beneficiaries as well as the first-ever MissionSTEM Summit. Ms. Manuel is the recipient of numerous awards, which include the White House Presidential Meritorious Rank Award, NASA's Distinguished Service Medal, Exceptional Service and Special Achievement Awards, and the Society of Women Engineers (SWE) Presidential Award. She holds a bachelor's degree in business management from Howard University, a juris doctor degree from the George Washington University Law Center, and is a member of the Pennsylvania and District of Columbia bars.

Dr. Philip (Phil) Sakimoto, an astrophysicist and science educator, is the former Program Manager and Acting Director of NASA's Space Science Education and Public Outreach Program. He also served as the manager of NASA's (Minority) University Research Centers Program and of NASA's Tribal Colleges and Universities Program. He is currently the Director of the Program for Academic Excellence at the University of Notre Dame. Dr. Sakimoto received his B.A. in physics from Pomona College and his M.A. and Ph.D. in astronomy from UCLA.