

Friends,

The IEEE SPS ME-UJR (Mentoring Experiences for Underrepresented Young Researchers) steering committee is proposing a new mentoring program for young IEEE SPS researchers and would like to invite you to join as potential student mentors. The program has been started this year to address a critical diversity issue in IEEE as well as other spoken language processing and signal processing organizations: the low percentage of women and underrepresented minorities. The number of female researchers in spoken language processing and signal processing within the IEEE community is about 10%. The numbers for other underrepresented minorities in other technical areas within signal processing are similar or even worse.

To address this imbalance, this new program will connect young researchers from underrepresented groups with established researchers in signal processing to support a student research project coordinated with the mentor which is of significant interest to both. Each project will last for 9 months. The young researchers will also be supported with travel funds to attend one conference or workshop after the project. An event in conjunction with the annual ICASSP conference will also be supported for the students to bring students and mentors together to share their experiences.

In this message, the ME-UJR committee is first recruiting potential mentors interested in increasing diversity within IEEE SPS and identifying their areas of research interest. We will send out a call to potential student participants asking them to sign up for an online "students meet mentors" event which we will also invite you to. This online event will be designed to match students with mentors in their field. Once you have accepted one of the students as your mentee the two of you will write a one-page proposal together describing a research plan of interest to you both and submit it to our evaluation committee for review (the deadline is December 1, 2021). This event will be held on October 28 at 11am Eastern Time. Please send an email to sp-me-ujr@listserv.ieee.org to register for the event.

Once mentors and students have been connected, the 9-month research mentoring projects will begin. We expect the first ME-UJR program to support about 12 projects in IEEE-SPS. A more detailed description of the program can be found here:

<https://signalprocessingsociety.org/community-involvement/me-ujr-mentoring-experiences-underrepresented-young-researchers-program> .

As a highly respected researcher in IEEE SPS organizations, we would very much like you to participate with us in this program. The lasting benefits to young diversity students themselves as well as to IEEE itself and the signal processing societies are extremely significant, so we would really appreciate your acceptance! Please respond by October 20 if you can join.

Sincerely yours,

IEEE SPS ME-UJR Committee

Irene Amerini

Oliver Cossairt

Mark Hasegawa-Johnson

Julia Hirschberg

Ina Kodrasi

Arvind Rao

Tirza Routtenberg

Odette Scharenborg