AM\_WISE Election Statements 2017

**Jenn Fulton: Discussion Lunch Chair or Treasurer/Secretary**

AM\_WISE is a wonderful community, of which I have been a member for the last 2 years. Now, heading into my third year of graduate school, I am eager to take on a greater leadership role. I am proud of our efforts to support and encourage diversity through a variety of avenues, ranging from fellowship to formal initiatives; and I hope you will entrust me with a job that will help further our cause. Given the differing nature of each job I’ve been nominated for, please bear with me as I explain below why I could happily and easily take on the role of lunch discussion chair, treasurer, or secretary.

*Discussion Lunch Chair*: While I greatly value the outreach activities AM\_WISE participates in, I have long loved this community most for our eagerness to engage in diverse and interesting conversations. As discussion lunch chair, I would love to further facilitate and cultivate those discussions. Given that this is a new position, I am excited to develop this lunch tradition and work with all of you to ensure the time is spent in a way that best serves your needs. I hope to give AM\_WISE members a space to come together and build relationships with one another as we eat food and talk about a myriad of important, interesting issues (i.e. current world events, ‘hot topics’ in science, tips and tricks for surviving grad school, sharing our everyday successes, etc.).

*Treasurer/Secretary/PR*: These two jobs are obviously quite different, but both require great attention to detail and excellent organization – skills that I have long developed and consider extremely valuable. As for the secretary position specifically, I have prior experience working with a variety of social media platforms, as well as with graphic design for making posters and other media. I hope to continue our efforts to expand AM\_WISE’s membership with open, effective communication of our events, initiatives, and ideals. Concerning the treasury position, I assure you that, in addition to the skills listed above, I will help to budget our finances wisely, keep our records in order, and carry out all of my duties in a timely fashion.

**Shannon Speer: Social Chair or Treasurer**

Throughout my undergraduate career at Rhodes College, I was fortunate enough to have a lot of support in the sciences from my academic advisors and professors. One of the faculty members, Dr. Dana Horgen, pushed me to believe in myself and a possible career as a scientist. Without the support and mentoring from Dr. Horgen, I do not know if I would be in the position I am today. During college, I held leadership positions in Gamma Sigma Epsilon and Chi Omega, and I want to support other women’s success and promotion in the sciences as Dr. Horgen did for me.  As the social chair in Chi Omega, I organized and planned multiple events for scholarship and sisterhood activities, and I would like to continue my involvement with supporting the empowerment of women. In addition, my involvement in teaching and scientific out-reach has strengthened my desire to spread my love for science to others. I hope to inspire women to pursue a career in science as my professors at Rhodes College did for me.

**Anna Reine: Sustenance Secretary**

I am a third year graduate student in the Physics and Astronomy department. I work in Experimental Nuclear and Astroparticle Physics group on an experiment called the MAJORANA DEMONSTRATOR, searching for a rare decay that would help scientists understand the fundamental nature of the universe’s lightest massive particle, the neutrino. I’ve found the AM\_WISE events that I’ve attended in the past to be both beneficial and enjoyable, and I’m interested in becoming more involved in the organization. Groups like AM\_WISE provide an important resource for women and other underrepresented minorities to work together towards common goals. In taking a more active role in AM\_WISE, I want to help scientists from underrepresented groups to form supportive network that allow us to advocate for ourselves while also participating in outreach efforts that impact the larger community.

**Megan Schutzbach:** **Vice President**

My graduate career has been filled with many challenges so far, but a consistent source of comfort for me has been my membership in AM\_WISE.  I joined the group in my first year and enjoyed attending meetings and outreach events that the group sponsored.  However, my appreciation for the group grew when I was elected to the Executive Board this past year.  My time on the Executive Board has taught me that AM\_WISE has the potential to accomplish great things and improve the graduate school environment for women and minorities in STEM fields.  The group sponsored many important events last year such as the Mentorship of the STEM Double Minority Symposium last February and our annual outreach events.

            I am so proud of everything that AM\_WISE has accomplished and believe that AM\_WISE has a productive year ahead. I would very much like to continue being a part of it.  With our growing group of members and expanded leadership, exciting, new opportunities will be available to us.

In addition to my interest in improving graduate school experiences for minorities and women, I am extremely interested in organizing AM\_WISE’s outreach events.  It is important to foster a love of science from an early age and help show the next generation of scientists that science is accessible to everyone.  I believe that I am qualified to serve as the Vice President of AM\_WISE because of my experience with the group so far.  In addition to helping organize meetings and events for the past year, I have organized our outreach activities for the annual UNC Science Expo and helped plan activities for the TechnoQuest event at Meredith College, our collaborative presentation with Science in the Stacks, and our annual Wikipedia Edit-a-thon.  I look forward to continuing to take part in these successful outreach events, as well as spearheading AM\_WISE’s participation in new events.

**Leah Bowers: President**

Shortly after starting UNC’s Chemistry PhD program, I felt lost.  I was excited to start my program, but a lot of challenges seemed to get in the way of me feeling at home enough to produce good research and succeed in general. I struggled for a while – compared myself to others, thought I did not belong in this program, etc. After I became more involved in the Initiative for Minority Excellence (IME) and Women in Science and Engineering (WISE), my anxieties waned. I found solace in these groups that support the success of URMs in STEM graduate programs. After first year, I became committed to the idea of promoting underrepresented minority (URM) support and inclusion within UNC’s STEM community. In other words, I strongly felt that no student should ever feel isolated because of her/his/their diversity nor should one student feel the brunt of advocating on his/her/their own behalf.

I became a board member of WISE – taking on a greater responsibility to cultivate a more inclusive environment for STEM graduate URMs. We began by changing our name from WISE to AM\_WISE, or Allies for Minorities and Women in Science and Engineering. The name change was a symbol of our recognition that there is both great strength in STEM student diversity and in a diverse set of advocates. We re-introduced ourselves at an event I spearheaded last February, called the *Mentorship of the STEM Double Minority* Symposium. I invited two speakers who talked about the unique biases women of color face in STEM programs, the challenges they faced, along with the importance of mentoring and supporting URM students with those unique biases and challenges in mind. The success of the symposium’s final segment, a facilitated discussion, made the AM\_WISE Board realize how important it is to share our own perspectives with peers. AM\_WISE immediately altered its meeting repertoire to solidly lie on a foundation of informal discussions. Members are given a chance to share opinions about articles the Board comes across and address policy changes they believe need to be made. The Board invites faculty member to come and share their perspectives on specific issues and and plans to have professional women come to talk about their careers in academia, industry and alternative settings.

I believe AM\_WISE is moving in the right direction. I plan to work with all of you and STEM faculty to progress the project our group started - getting UNC STEM programs to mandate mentorship training for all incoming faculty. I am also excited to strengthen the relationship AM\_WISE has with the Chemistry Diversity Committee as a student liaison and continue sharing information regarding important resources UNC offers its students. If elected president of AM\_WISE, I will keep fighting to make UNC STEM programs feel more inclusive to those who think they don’t belong. It is my hope you would join me.