

THE AMS BOARD FOR EARLY CAREER PROFESSIONALS

Past, Present, and Future Perspectives

STEPHEN STRADER, JARED RENNIE, AND BECKY DePODWIN (AMS BOARD FOR EARLY CAREER PROFESSIONALS)

HISTORY OF THE AMS BOARD FOR EARLY CAREER PROFESSIONALS (BECP). In 2010, the AMS Membership Committee, led by Ken Carey (NOAA; AMS Fellow), discovered a significant gap in early career professionals. An early career professional is defined as someone who is within 10 years of having earned their highest graduate degree or within 15 years of having earned their baccalaureate degree. A study at the time showed that following graduation, a significant number of individuals chose not to maintain their membership. Insights into why this was the case included the cost to maintain membership, work–life balance, and not being able to attend conferences due to financial reasons.

To address this lack of early career professional membership within AMS, a subcommittee was formed in 2011 to explore potential solutions to this problem. Simultaneously, a reception for early career professionals (then titled “young professionals”) was held at the 91st Annual Meeting in Seattle. After discussions throughout 2011, a proposal to establish the Board for Young Professionals was introduced late that year. In January 2012, the proposal was approved and renamed the Board for Early Career Professionals (BECP). The initial goal of the BECP was to act as a resource for the development of early career professionals, both academic and in career, and to serve as a platform for early career involvement in a variety of AMS-sponsored activities. The board also aimed to highlight four major sectors of the weather, water, and

climate enterprise: academia, broadcast, government, and private sector.

Some of the action items of the BECP during its inaugural year included regular articles in *BAMS* featuring early career professionals and establishing a web and social media presence. The BECP twitter account (@AMSEarlyCareer) was one of the first accounts to be approved by AMS. Another major item of the board was to plan for a conference for early career professionals. Building upon the successes of the student conference that began in 2002, the early career professional conference highlighted concerns facing young professionals and provided examples through AMS leaders still early in their careers.

In January 2013, the 1st Conference for Early Career Professionals was held at the 93rd Annual Meeting in Austin. The agenda included topics such as “Landing the Job” and “Developing Your Skillset.” A session dedicated to AMS programs and opportunities was provided, and the conference ended with a panel discussion featuring young professionals in all four sectors of meteorology followed by an evening reception for early career professionals. Over time, the length of the conference has expanded to multiple days allowing for more in-depth discussion and a wider range of conference topics. The board continues to plan its annual reception on Sunday night while also sponsoring other events, including the CoRiolis reception on Sunday evening, the speed networking event

on Monday night, and an informal #WxTwitter meetup at the host city.

While the annual conference plays a large role in BECP activities throughout the year, other initiatives have been undertaken throughout its history. In 2016, the social media team began to engage with its members, including a monthly segment titled “Perspectives from Early Career Professionals.” Each month, an interview is posted on the BECP Facebook account (@AMSEarlyCareerProfessionals) highlighting a member of the weather, water, and climate enterprise. This provides opportunities for students and early career professionals to learn from and interact with their peers and mentors. Recently, the social media team offered the opportunity to give everyone a voice in the #ShareYourStory campaign. Each week a prompt is posted on the Twitter account, and anyone—early, mid, or late career—can answer these questions. The #ShareYourStory campaign has been proven to be very interactive and popular. #ShareYourStory posts are archived on the BECP webpage, so members can reflect and look back at past experiences.

In recent years, the BECP has worked alongside the AMS Commission on Professional Affairs and established a commission-level award named the “Award for Early Career Achievement.” In 2015, more than 10 nomination packages were submitted, and the award was given to Ankur Desai at the University of Wisconsin—Madison. From 2016 to 2017, the number of nominations grew, and the award was given to Manda Adams at the National Science Foundation (2016) and Melissa Burt at the Colorado State University (2017). Given the quality and high number of submissions, the BECP proposed moving the award up to Society level in 2017. As such, the AMS Award for Early Career Achievement was approved by the AMS Council at the beginning of 2018 and is now recognized as a Society-level award where annual awardees are honored at the AMS Annual Meeting banquet.

CURRENT BECP ACTIVITIES. In 2019, the AMS BECP continues to focus on a number of activities aimed at expanding the number of early career professional AMS members and improving their impact in the weather enterprise as a whole. For example, the BECP hosted the 7th Annual Early Career Professionals Conference at the 99th AMS Annual Meeting in Phoenix this past January. This conference continued a history of creating the

opportunity for early career professionals to network with more senior AMS members; improve their professional skillsets whether they are in the academic, public, or private sector; and learn how to address often-difficult workplace issues such as diversity, conflict resolution, salary negotiation, etc. Also during the 7th Annual Early Career Conference, Gina Eosco (NOAA Office of Weather & Air Quality) was honored as the inaugural recipient of the AMS commission-level Award for Early Career Achievement. The board has also been active in developing the AMS Early Career Leadership Academy. A joint effort between BECP and the Board on Women and Minorities, the academy brings together a select group of early career professionals—in particular, women and underrepresented minorities—for an immersion experience in leadership. This includes three online webinars and an in-person meeting, where the cohort learns what it takes to be a leader through personal experiences, peer mentoring, and communication.

Our social media team continues to engage with many students, longstanding AMS members, and potential future AMS members through the #ShareYourStory and Perspectives from Early Career Professionals campaigns. At the time of writing, there are 2,700 followers on Twitter and 1,300 on Facebook. Recently, the board also started its own Instagram account, and within a few weeks, hundreds of followers joined.

FUTURE BECP ACTIVITIES AND PLANS.

The future of the BECP is bright. The Board is extending its reach at AMS conferences and is working to have more joint sessions during the 100th Annual Meeting in Boston. Given the unique insight we have to add to AMS as a whole, we will aim to increase collaboration with other boards and committees to share as much information as widely as possible and broaden BECP’s reach within the Society.

The Early Career Conference at the AMS Annual Meeting is our chance to connect with many young professionals in person, and we will work to make sure our conference continues to feature meaningful and relevant topics that will resonate with early career professionals and further their understanding of the importance of staying connected to AMS. Additionally, the BECP will continue to host informal events at regional conferences throughout the year, giving young professionals a chance to network and socialize with colleagues from the various sectors in a low-key setting.

Our social media presence will be expanding, finding new ways to connect and communicate with early career professionals, including informative webinars, online hangouts, and sharing articles and insights that spark further discussion.

The Board for Early Career Professionals has a platform and ability to share the positive benefits of being an active AMS member, and the ability to

do so in a way that meets young professionals where they are. The AMS is a century-old organization and has an incredible legacy of moving the weather enterprise forward. The BECP plays a pivotal role in ensuring that momentum is carried into the next hundred years by informing, engaging, and mentoring the next generation of atmospheric scientists.