

# 2010 MEDALS & AWARDS

## BROMERY AWARD FOR THE MINORITIES

Presented to Marilyn J. Suiter



Marilyn J. Suiter  
National Science Foundation

### *Citation by Rex C. Buchanan*

Marilyn Suiter, the recipient of the Geological Society of America's 2010 Bromery Award for Minorities, has worked tirelessly on behalf of education in the geosciences. She is a particularly determined and effective advocate of diversity throughout the Earth sciences. Marilyn is a role model, mentor, and proponent for change.

Marilyn's career encompasses an incredible range of teaching, industry, and organizational experience, everything from the classrooms of Philadelphia, to the plains of southwestern Kansas, to the corridors of Congress and the White House. After receiving degrees from Franklin and Marshall and Wesleyan University, Marilyn taught science in grades 5-12 in the Philadelphia Public School System. She then spent four years with the U.S. Geological Survey, primarily in geologic mapping, then four years in exploration in the Hugoton Embayment for Cities Service Oil and Gas. From 1987 to 1998 Marilyn held several positions at the American Geological Institute. Most involved Earth science education and under-represented populations, and included acquisition of more than a million dollars of funding for the educational program, Earth Science in the Community, and increasing the level of AGI Minority Participation Program scholarships.

Since 1998, Marilyn has been at the National Science Foundation, serving as

a Program Director for Education and Human Resources. She is responsible for geoscience education and diversity programs, and has been the lead program officer for various NSF efforts, including managing the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring, and the Historically Black Colleges and Universities Undergraduate Program.

In addition to those formal roles, Marilyn has been an active volunteer for Earth science education, serving on committees for AGI, NSF, the Association for Women in Science, the National Research Council, the National Association for Black Geologists and Geophysicists, and the National Science Teachers Association. She has been chair of GSA's Geology and Society Division, and president of the Association of Women Geoscientists.

Marilyn is a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, of the Association for Women in Science, and the Geological Society of America. She has been given various other commendations from AGI, NSF, and the Association for Women Geoscientists.

This listing of positions, offices, and awards does not, however, begin to capture what Marilyn has brought to the causes she believes in so deeply. She is consistently thoughtful, giving expression to new ideas that reach out to others, that especially engage and include those who are sometimes forgotten. She is articulate and enthusiastic, expressing her ideas in ways that make others want to help. She is agreeable and good-natured; she listens carefully to what others have to say. She is persistent, making it clear that she is committed to the things she wants to accomplish. Finally, she believes in following through. She does what she says she is going to do, and only commits to those things that she can, and will, accomplish.

And she has accomplished much. She is a constant presence on panels and podiums, tirelessly carrying her message. She has written extensively and published widely. She is the "type section" of a visible and effective leader.

And yet, at the end of the day, what mainly matters are the things she has accomplished and the people whose life she has touched. I have known Marilyn since her time AGI, but every time I see her at an Earth-science function, I'm struck by the number and range of people she knows. She seems to recognize, and hug, just about everybody. Walk with Marilyn through the exhibit hall at GSA, and you won't go more than a few steps

before she encounters someone who wants to talk to her. When I was collecting materials to nominate Marilyn for this award, it was easy to find people who wanted to contribute, people who considered her a mentor, people who would testify eloquently to Marilyn's impact on their careers and on the Earth sciences.

All of us believe in what we do. We believe that the Earth sciences are critical to providing energy, minerals, and water, to helping to solve the environmental issues that society faces. We believe that knowing about the Earth, and the way it operates, is intrinsically interesting. We believe this knowledge is important to others throughout society.

We also know that hearing from a diversity of viewpoints can only improve our discipline. We know that different voices bring new and creative ideas that make the earth sciences better. We know these things. Yet the Earth sciences have long failed, frankly, to reach out, to include women and minorities, to make the Earth sciences demographically representative of the society we live in. And we are all the poorer for it.

Marilyn Suiter has done more to change that, to improve the range of voices heard in the Earth sciences, than anyone I know. The Earth sciences, the Geological Society of America, and all of us are better today because of Marilyn and what she has done. I think all of us want to make things better. Marilyn has actually done it.

### *Response by Marilyn J. Suiter*

Thank you. I very much appreciate Rex's kind words, the support of the nominators, and the significant honor of receiving the GSA 2010 Bromery Award for the Minorities.

The goal of achieving increased diverse participation — in the geosciences, in science, and in education and employment opportunities — is something that has been a natural pursuit for me. This may have stemmed from the encouragement of my parents who always told me that I could pursue any career that I chose. I was fortunate enough that my interest in science was always acknowledged and supported — by my family and friends, by my K-12 educators, and by various faculty and professionals along the way. This is not to say that the path was easy for me, but easier by far than it is for many young people. Making sure that others have the kind of support that I received — and receive — is probably the driving force for what I do.

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But it is very important to note that no one does or achieves such outcomes alone. Therefore I thank the many people in this room with whom I have worked over the years to extend opportunities to those individuals lacking sufficient support. “Thank you” also to those not present — some by simple absence, or some who have passed away like Marcus Milling and Nick Claudy

at AGI, Mack Gipson and Patricia Hall at NABGG, and Suzanne Takken at AWG. And you who as you hear or read this message recognize the importance of mentoring and offering opportunities — with you I hope to work in coming weeks and months.

In closing, I extend a special thank you to the Bromerys who had the foresight and generosity to establish this award, and who

have long stood as role models for inclusion and leadership, and for the partnership and support of the GSA Foundation. With talented colleagues engaged in the effort, we are unlimited in what we can achieve.

Again, I thank you.