ICFO



SPIE Announces a $1 Million Endowed Diversity-Focused Chair at ICFO

The SPIE@ICFO Chair for Diversity in Photonic Sciences is the first of its nature and magnitude awarded by SPIE to a European institute

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ICFO is a unique place. Located in Barcelona, it has managed to attract a very special group of women and men from various technological areas and fields of science, curious to learn and share knowledge in order to innovate and advance frontier science. "Special" because today the center hosts around 400 researchers and staff from more than 60 different nationalities, an amalgamation of languages, beliefs and cultures which gives the center an extraordinarily rich and diverse atmosphere in terms of ways of thinking, acting, learning and living science. i¿½I am a materials scientist, working in a group of 15 people, from 10 differe t countries. Our scientific backgrounds also vary widely: chemistry, physics, electron c engineering, materials science etc.,and we are working together on the same projects.i¿½ comments Yu Bi, a post-doctoral research from China.

Since its creation, ICFO has been committed to promoting diversity at the center and in its research programs, and has been active in coordinating and reinforcing inclusion programs for minority groups and those who fall short of equal access to opportunities. Examples include participation in the program offering research stays to senior female researchers from Africa through the i¿½Women for Africai¿½ program, doctoral scholarships for y ung female scientists through the ENLIGHTEN program, co-financed by the Euro ean Commission, or the recently launched European project CARLA, coordinated by ICFO, w ich will develop professional camps for young researchers, focusing specifically on broade ing the diversity of profiles in STEM fields.

In recognition of ICFO's efforts and history of leadership in this field, SPIE, the International Society of Optics and Photonics based in Bellingham, Washington (USA) has recently announced the formalization of the SPIE @ ICFO Chair for Diversity in Photonic Sciences with an **endowment of US $ 1 million**, including a sum of $500,000 in funding from SPIE. The Chair is part of the SPIE Endowment Matching program that was designed to increase international capacity in the teaching and research of optics and photonics. Since the program's establishment in 2019, four institutes in the US have benefited, however it is the **first time that funding of this nature and magnitude has been awarded to an institution in Europe**.

The remit of the Chair is to reinforce the center's activities for the promotion of diversity in all its forms, starting with its multiple programs to support the education and careers of young female scientists from diverse backgrounds. The ambition for the Chair goes beyond gender diversity and aims to broaden the diversity in photonic sciences in general by supporting motivated students and researchers in the field who would otherwise not have such opportunities. This is especially important in the context of the current global crisis situation where young people lacking access to opportunities and resources are in greater danger of being left behind.

To begin, it will support talented young female scientists through scholarships and stays through the SPIE@ICFO Chair Maria Yzuel Fellowship Award Internships program. It will provide travel grants to students from around the world to attend international schools organized by ICFO through the SPIE@ICFO Chair Travel Fellowship, and will also support the development of scientific research projects at the institute through the SPIE@ICFO Chair Research Fellowship.

i¿½This exciting partnership with ICFO beautifully complements our own commitment o enhancing equity, diversity, and inclusion across the optics and photonics communityi¿ ? said SPIE President John Greivenkamp. i¿½We are delighted to support an education program

which will focus on active promotion of a tolerant, welcoming work environment that meets the academic and research needs of a diverse population.i¿½

ICFO places a great deal of importance on the international and multi-cultural environment at the institute that enables a wide range of perspectives to contribute in unique ways to advancing solutions to complex scientific challenges. "We are extremely proud of this long-lasting alliance with SPIE", comments Lluis Torner, ICFO director. i¿½Its visionary endowment program will afford the possibility to launch a unique SPIE@ICFO Chair for Diversity in Photonic Sciences, a topic both organizations consider to be of paramount importance to enhance innovation, creativity, and excellence across the board. I would like to thank SPIE for its outstanding support and our Board of Trustees for making the program possible, and I want to congratulate the Chair and Vice-Chairs, Rob Sewell, Silvia Carrasco, and Laia Miralles, for their appointment".



Chair holders: Rob Sewell, Laia Miralles, Silvia Carrasco