



SSURF April 2020 News

April 2020

Dear SSURF Community:

Thank you for your support of SSURF and our shared commitment to representing the nation's user facilities and users.

In response to COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis is highlighting how important national user facilities are for the scientific community. Dr. Chris Fall, Director of the Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Science, was recently interviewed by the Direct Current Podcast on the Department's efforts to combat the virus. Of particular interest to the SSURF community is Dr. Fall's assertion that our national user facilities constitute one of three science and technology 'superpowers' being brought to bear on the pandemic by the DOE. The user facility model is extremely well suited to react quickly in a crisis, because the user facilities themselves are accustomed to serving the ever-changing interests of the broader scientific community.

A wide array of important COVID-19 projects are underway across the DOE complex, many in collaboration with other government agencies, academia, and the healthcare industry. To learn more about how the DOE is supporting COVID-19 research, please visit:
<https://www.energy.gov/covid-19-hub>

SSURF Updates

2019 was a successful year for SSURF. We navigated a major personnel change on the Board of Directors; we instituted additional strategic planning and reorganized our team of volunteers; and, we piloted two new outreach activities. 2020 also looks to be an active year despite the current crisis: we intend to hire our first paid executive director and repeat some of the successes from 2019.

The search for an executive director is being led by the Alliance for Better Nonprofits. We have now closed the application period and are reviewing a large pool of applicants. This process will be ongoing into early summer and we look forward to providing updates to our membership as the search progresses.

Finally, the SSURF Board of Directors along with the SSURF Nominating Committee is soliciting nominations for new Board members for the 2020 to 2023 term. The new members' terms will start July 1, 2020. Based on the membership in the current board and expected turnover, we will be putting forward a slate of three to five new members. The Nominating committee will reach out to individual candidates to confirm interest and gather information on



their board relevant experiences to inform the board's final slate selection. Please forward any proposed candidates or self-nominations by including the candidate's name, organization, email, and phone number to the SSURF Board Secretary at rdleonard.7@gmail.com by May 1, 2020.

Congressional Staff Delegation

Over the years our membership has participated in many events on Capitol Hill with individuals and exhibits visiting Washington to educate members and staffers about the importance of user facility research. This year we hope to reverse the arrangement and sponsor staffers to visit the user facilities, provided travel of this nature is feasible. Last year the delegation included staffers from the offices of Reps. Frankel, Calvert and Lucas, plus a staffer and a Fellow from the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology. We spent three days visiting Bay Area user facilities including NIF, ALS, NERSC, ESnet, JGI, MF, LCLS and SSRL. The group had multiple opportunities to speak with users and understand their research areas and concerns, providing a fantastic opportunity to demonstrate the impact of user facility research.

The Board has agreed going forward SSURF should focus on staff delegations when possible. We hope to design a schedule once travel resumes that rotates regions of the country year to year. This is a unique but important role that SSURF can play as a non-profit organization. In the meantime, the Board is committed to improving and expanding its online networks and presence, with plans to launch more strategic digital communications by summer 2020.

MRS Facility Row

Last summer at the suggestion of the Center for Integrated Nanotechnologies, a member facility, SSURF sponsored a new type of outreach activity at the 2019 MRS Fall Meeting and Exhibit in Boston. SSURF member facility volunteers worked with MRS staff to set aside a portion of the exhibit hall as a "Facility Row" – an area reserved solely for user facilities like those among our membership. This space provided a concentrated area where prospective users could peruse user facilities, engage with staff, and learn about the many benefits to becoming facility users and joining our organization. SSURF sponsored refreshments helping to drive traffic to Facility Row. SSURF also sponsored an event on the central Hub Stage, during which member facilities gave three-minute flash talks to the audience describing each facilities' capabilities.

The event was extremely successful with the Nanoscale Science Research Centers collecting approximately 50% more leads than during a typical national conference exposition, including high quality leads comprising a large percentage of active researchers. The Hub Stage event was also well attended compared to previous dedicated symposia. The MRS organizers are enthusiastic about conducting this again in 2020, had two additional facilities agree to participate, and SSURF will likely play an even bigger role. Please stay tuned and consider participating in the 2020 MRS Fall Meeting and Exhibit.

Annual Meeting



The 2019 SSURF Annual Meeting was an opportunity for the SSURF community to discuss challenges, opportunities, and recent developments within the User Facility system. The meeting was well attended and led to many vibrant and timely discussions. The Meeting format intentionally included time for a town-hall discussion providing ample opportunity for the audience to actively contribute. Feedback from the conference was positive and SSURF will repeat the format next year and is happy to take additional suggestions for structure or content inclusion. The Meeting also excellent presentations by Leland Cogliani, Paul Doucette, and Norm Peterson on the state of appropriations. We are currently soliciting presentation topics for the 2020 Annual Meeting – please let us know if there is an issue you would like to hear about! The Annual Meeting committee can be reached through Board Member Jason Benedict (jbb6@buffalo.edu).

After the Meeting, the Board participated in a strategic planning retreat led by Jerry Askew from the Alliance for Better Nonprofits where we identified strategic goals for this next year and assigned Board members responsible for each. These goals include the executive director search, improving Board engagement, making more effective use of our volunteers, and improving communications. This exercise was an important step towards SSURF’s evolution into a sustainable organization.

On behalf of the entire SSURF Board of Directors, thank you again for your support.

Best Regards,

Adam J. Rondinone
Chair, SSURF Board of Directors