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Talitha M Washington* (talitha.washington@howard.edu), Department of Mathematics, Howard University, Washington, DC 20059, and **Vernon R. Morris** (vmorris@howard.edu), Department of Chemistry, Howard University, Washington, DC 20059. *The Role of Professional Societies in STEM Diversity.*

The overall percentages of African American scientists indicates underrepresentation in most science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines and the percentages appear to be declining over the last three decades. Despite investments in diversity programs, the observable impact on STEM leadership and the demographics of the science and technology workforce remains quite small. This presentation will highlight some of the challenges and barriers that many students and professionals who seek to pursue careers in these fields face, and the role of professional societies in either exacerbating the perpetuation of monocultures in the various STEM disciplines or proactively working to eliminate barriers and discrimination.

We will present and provide clarity on three common myths that are often articulated in discussions of STEM diversity. We will share insights on how professional societies can directly impact the broadening of participation as well as the persistence of racial groups in the STEM fields and hence, strengthen and sustain the Nation's future workforce. (Received September 26, 2017)