

Marín-Spiotta Receives 2016 Sulzman Award for Excellence in Education and Mentoring

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Erika Marín-Spiotta will receive the 2016 Sulzman Award for Excellence in Education and Mentoring at the 2016 American Geophysical Union Fall Meeting, to be held 12-16 December in San Francisco, Calif. The award is given for “significant contributions by a mid-career female scientist as a role model and mentor for the next generation of biogeoscientists.”



Erika Marín-Spiotta

Citation

Erika Marín-Spiotta, an Associate Professor at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, was awarded the 2016 Sulzman Award for Excellence in Education and Mentoring. The Sulzman Award is given annually for significant contributions as a role model and mentor for the next generation of biogeoscientists. Erika perfectly fits this role through her excellent research, service, and teaching. Not only does Erika lead a cutting-edge research program at the interface of biogeochemistry, ecosystem ecology, soil science, and geography, she is widely recognized as a dedicated advisor, mentor, and advocate of students of all levels. As one letter writer states, “Erika fully deserves such recognition for her dedication to ideals and practice

of mentorship, from which not only her lab “family” greatly benefits, but which also benefit a much broader network of people throughout the Earth Sciences community.” Further, Erika is a tireless advocate for women and those from underrepresented groups. This is highlighted across many of her activities, from Erika’s work as a board member of the nonprofit Earth Science Women’s Network, to her leadership to educate the geoscience community about the problem of sexual harassment.

As another letter writer wrote, “In summary, [Erika] is an excellent candidate for [the Sulzman Award] because she is a strong mentor and educator, as well as a strong intellectual role model. Her public work advocating for women in science is also fundamentally intersectional, recognizing the importance of addressing gender inequality in the context of race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation. She is clearly making the academy a better place.” Erika Marín-Spiotta’s contributions to the field of biogeosciences, and beyond, have been transformative.

—Christine Wiedinmyer, National Center for Atmospheric Research, Boulder, Colo.

Response

It’s an honor to receive the Sulzman Award. I would like to thank Christine Wiedinmyer for nominating me, my letter writers for their support, and the volunteers who served on the selection committee. One of the most rewarding aspects of my job is working with students inside and outside the classroom. Teaching has made me a better scientist, and my work has benefited from engaging with students from different backgrounds who bring new perspectives to the learning process and content. I am a strong advocate of early and active engagement in research for undergraduate students, as this has been shown to have a transformative effect on student achievement, especially for historically underrepresented students. My lab has a strong mentoring culture, and I actively encourage mentor training and the professional development of my graduate and undergraduate students. I am fortunate to work in a place that recognizes the value of teaching and mentorship. I have benefited from several programs led by colleagues on campus that train faculty to be better mentors and educators as well as provide mentorship at different career stages. I am thankful for the opportunities to take on leadership roles through the Earth Science Women’s Network (ESWN) and here at AGU to make science more inclusive. I am especially proud of the work we are doing to come up with solutions to the vile problem of sexual harassment and other forms of bullying and discrimination, and have been inspired by the broad coalition of individuals, organizations, and institutions coming together. I am thankful for a network of generous mentors and mentees who have helped me along my career and inspired me to help others.

—Erika Marín-Spiotta, University of Wisconsin–Madison, Madison

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Erika Marín-Spiotta, an ESWN Leadership Board Member, will receive the Sulzman Award for Excellence in Education and Mentoring from AGU (the American Geophysical Union) in December of 2016. This award recognizes “significant contributions by a mid-career female scientist as a role model and mentor for the next generation of biogeoscientists.”