Abstract:
In this talk, I will highlight the aspects of US professional astronomy which are lowering the barriers to participation. In addition to describing the layout of the astronomical community, I aim to provide practical information which will help junior astronomers and their mentors to navigate this unique landscape. I will discuss the role of blogs and social media in providing access to the unwritten rules of the field and support to isolated scientists. I will also describe the opportunities presented by the rise of code sharing and community software development practices which have been made possible by GitHub, and exemplified by the Astropy Project. I will showcase examples of institutional leadership by federal agencies, observatories, and professional organizations which have expanded access to astronomical data and training. Finally, I will briefly describe how the current Astronomy and Astrophysics Decadal Survey process has the potential to impact even greater cultural change for US Astronomy in the decade to come.