

2020 Annual Report  
of the Robert & Patricia  
Switzer Foundation

*The Robert and Patricia Switzer Foundation was formed in 1985 in Cleveland, Ohio. Its core giving program is the Switzer Environmental Fellowship program, which supports talented graduate students who are dedicated to environmental problem solving. Beyond the fellowship program, the foundation offers a variety of professional and leadership development grants and resources to fellows throughout their careers. The foundation intends its grantmaking to be instrumental in creating a cadre of highly motivated, trained, and committed individuals who will be the environmental leaders of tomorrow. All grant programs are administered through the foundation's office in Belfast, Maine.*

**From the Board Chair and the Executive Director:**



Joe Aldy

**2020** was an extraordinary year that called for the Switzer Foundation to be flexible and responsive. The novel coronavirus pandemic required the staff to quickly adapt how we work as a team, reimagine several annual events, and create new resources and opportunities for the Switzer Network to connect. We successfully supported current fellows to participate in virtual retreats and trainings, convened virtual interviews to select an excellent cohort of new fellows, and hosted a productive annual Board meeting. Although we very much look forward to meeting in person again, in some cases we learned

that convening virtually can reduce barriers and create more equitable access to our events, expand engagement of Switzer Network alumni located around the country and the world, and decrease travel time and costs that can be put to better use for fellows.

The pandemic was accompanied by a rapid economic recession and widespread protests for racial justice. We invited the Switzer Network to use our communications platforms to share resources and offer support for one another, consider our grant programs as opportunities to radically reimagine solutions for the environment and social equity, and engage our networking events as forums for organizing collective action among Switzer Fellows. To provide critical support to Switzer Fellows experiencing under-employment and economic uncertainty, we relaunched the Leadership Grant program and expanded the Professional Development Fund.



Sarah Reed

One of our proudest accomplishments over the past year has been to engage Switzer Fellows as partners and co-leaders in implementing our programs. We appointed nine founding members of the reconvened Fellows Advisory Committee (FAC); they held their first meeting in July and are already making important contributions to the strategic review process. We also have a leadership team of three Switzer Fellow alumni coordinating the Race and Equity Discussion Group, two fellows led the foundation's partnership with the TED Countdown initiative, and several more fellows have volunteered to lead recent networking calls and virtual social hours. Moving forward, we are expanding participation in the Switzer Fellowship review process, inviting volunteers from the Switzer Network to review applications and help select the next generation of environmental leaders.

With Sarah's leadership, we are also conducting a review of the foundation's strategies, programs and impacts with the goal of completing a visioning process at the next annual Board meeting in May 2021. More details about the process and outcomes of this important activity will follow in our next annual report.

We are inspired by the creativity, passion, and hard work of Switzer Fellows. As we move into a new year, we are optimistic and hopeful for the continued efforts of everyone in the Switzer Network in improving our communities and the world around us in 2021 and beyond.



Switzer Fellow Nick Jensen at field site in California.

### Foundation supports As You Sow shareholder resolutions

As part of our effort to better align our investments with our mission, the foundation is committed to engaging in shareholder resolutions that encourage companies to strengthen or adopt new policies and practices to improve environmental quality. In November 2019, for the first time the foundation's investment committee voted to support several shareholder resolutions advanced by **As You Sow**. Due to positive dialogue with the companies involved, two of the resolutions were withdrawn (which is considered a successful outcome). One of the resolutions did go to a vote, and received an exceptionally high level of support (49.6%). Another resolution was challenged by the company and ultimately blocked by the SEC. Building on this experience, in future years the investment committee will continue to consider supporting resolutions filed by our partners at As You Sow, alongside other strategies to ensure that our investments are aligned with our mission to improve environmental quality and advance social equity. [Read more](#)

#### OUR VALUES

*Belief in individuals*

*Environmental stewardship*

*Sustainability*

*Social equity and diversity*

*Systems thinking and problem-solving*

*Maximizing impact*

### Professional Development grants fill an important gap in an extraordinary year

The Professional Development Grant program awards grants of up to \$1,000 to support fellows' attendance at important conferences or other professional events. This program recognizes that funding for professional development is not always readily available in the public sector, and that environmental leaders benefit from new skills and opportunities to broaden their networks. Aside from the fellowship program, these grants support the greatest breadth of fellows since professionals at all career stages benefit from the opportunities it supports. Examples of recent grants include:

1. \$500 to Lauren Richter to support her participation in the Future Faculty Success Program offered by the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity. This program provided mentorship and peer support to Lauren as a new faculty member at the Rhode Island School of Design.
2. \$500 to Kristen Goodrich to assist with tuition for a mindfulness-based stress reduction course offered through UC San Diego. This eight-week course provided Kristen with critical stress reduction skills to add her to her leadership tool box in her work as Coastal Training Program Coordinator at the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve.
3. \$1,000 to Daisy Benitez, Senior Staff Engineer at Brown and Caldwell in Atlanta, Georgia, to assist with the tuition for a six-month training course to prepare for her Environmental Engineering Professional Exam.
4. \$720 to Melissa Garren, CEO of Working Ocean Strategies, to support her participation in Rockwood Leadership Institute's "Navigating Change" workshop.
5. \$1,000 to Noa Lincoln, Assistant Professor at University of Hawai'i at Manoa, to assist with the tuition for Hawai'i's Agricultural Leadership Program, a two-year educational opportunity that focuses on exposure and training in agricultural policy and in-depth study of Hawai'i's agriculture and agricultural supply chains.

### Foundation joins Just Vote movement

The nonprofit sector employs up to 20 million potential voters, which corresponds to 16% of all votes cast in the 2016 election. When nonprofit staff members volunteer as poll workers or otherwise support the voting process, it can increase engagement of underrepresented groups, including younger and lower-income voters. Providing paid time off also felt critically important in 2020, given anticipated challenges due to the pandemic for people who plan to vote in person, especially for parents and other caregivers who are disproportionately women and people of color. In light of this, the foundation joined our peers in the philanthropic and nonprofit sectors to provide paid time off for our staff to vote and volunteer in nonpartisan engagement efforts tied to the 2020 election. Specifically, we have updated our employee benefits policy to make Election Day a paid holiday, beginning in 2020. [Read more](#)

### Vegetarian meals at foundation events

Science and society are increasingly acknowledging the climate costs of food production. In August 2019, the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released a major report on land use and climate change, which indicated that food production accounts for one-quarter (23%) of global greenhouse gas emissions, and more than half (58%) of food emissions come from animal products. The report's authors emphasized that by reducing meat consumption, more people could be fed using less land and CO2 emissions could be reduced, creating "major opportunities for adaptation and mitigation while generating significant co-benefits in terms of human health."

A desire to minimize the climate costs of the foundation's programs is also something we have heard from fellows. As we recently transitioned to a combined fall retreat for both east and west coast fellows, which necessarily involves cross-country travel for half of the cohort, fellows have encouraged the foundation to reduce or offset the emissions associated with this travel. Suggestions have included eliminating meat from retreat meals and offering incentives for train travel where possible. Therefore, we have decided as a staff to serve only vegetarian meals at foundation events from now on. [Read more](#)

### OUR VISION

*By 2026, Switzer Fellows will be recognized leaders driving positive environmental change for the benefit of natural and human communities.*

### OUR STRATEGIES

*To accomplish our mission and carry out our vision, the Switzer Foundation awards academic fellowships and project grants, supporting a continuum of environmental leadership from graduate school through professional careers, and nurturing leaders who will be instrumental in driving environmental change. The foundation sponsors professional development activities, facilitates collaboration and communication among Switzer Fellows through the Switzer Network.*

### Foundation crafting Land Acknowledgement

This past year, the foundation committed to the regular practice of acknowledging the Indigenous people who are the original and ongoing stewards of the land which we currently occupy throughout the country. The Switzer Foundation's office in Belfast, Maine, resides on occupied Penobscot territory—specifically, on Passagassawakeag Bay: a name which translates to “place to spear sturgeon by torchlight.” The Penobscot Nation, a riverine culture, stewarded the land, rivers, and shoreline for 11,000 years prior to European colonization. The European settlers disrupted this land-relationship through clear-cutting, damming, overfishing, and disease, and broke peace treaties with, forcibly removed, and killed the Penobscot people, laying the groundwork for us, in 2020, to continue to occupy their lands.

Our staff and network are dispersed across this continent and around the world, and we encourage our fellows and colleagues to research, reflect on, and show up for the tribes local to them. We recognize that the entirety of the North American continent constitutes territory considered to be original Indigenous homelands and we respect the sovereignty of the Penobscot Nation, the Wabanaki Confederacy, and the hundreds of other Native American Indigenous nations that survive today. We pledge to support the rights of these nations and the interests of Indigenous peoples. [Read more](#)

### Network Innovation grants awarded in 2020

The **Switzer Network Innovation grant** program supports two or more Switzer Fellows working together across sectors and disciplines to address an issue. This program seeks to tap the Switzer Network's collective potential for innovation and action to solve today's complex environmental issues.



### Become a JEDI Master: Journey Toward a More Equitable Future

Jolisa Brooks, Daisy Benitez and Genie Bey were awarded a **\$10,000 Network Innovation grant** to create a toolkit and resources that will provide a starting point for interrogating the causes of inequity in American society, specifically as it relates to racial, environmental, gender, and economic oppression. Too often organizations propagate diversity for diversity's sake and focus on feel-good narratives and leadership training that are absent of historical and theoretical analyses. The products generated from this grant will fill a gap in available and accessible resources—specifically, educational products that provide a theoretical and historical context for inequity as well as articulate how historical systems of oppression influence contemporary environmental and global justice movements. [Read more](#)

## Fellow Impact Stories:

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With nearly **700 Switzer Fellows** across the country and around the world, we have awarded:

Over **\$8,700,000** in Switzer Fellowships

**\$6,500,000** in Leadership grants

**\$401,000** in Collaborative and Network Innovation grants

Over **\$130,000** in Professional Development grants

The following stories are a small selection of examples of how Switzer Fellows are making an impact across fields. To see more visit the *Fellows in the News* section of our website.

- During **Candice Youngblood's** final year at Berkeley Law, she pitched and organized a 200+ attendee environmental justice symposium to increase environmental justice scholarship and discourse within the environmental legal field. Ecology Law Quarterly published a special issue for the symposium, which featured Candice, Irene Vasquez and Mike Wilson.

[Read more](#)



- **Nigel Golden** presented the 2020 Ambrose Jearld Jr. Lecture on Diversity and Inclusion at NOAA in July. His remarks focused on the importance of addressing



the cultural and structural barriers to full participation by marginalized communities in STEM. Golden provided a framework for addressing the systemic issues that may explain and/or address those barriers. [Read more](#)

- **Andrew Cohen** has been vocal in his criticism of ignoring the importance of false positives and the global strategy of diagnosing COVID-19 based on a single positive test in the absence of any symptoms. His own research on using PCR tests on mussels led him to medical literature from previous pandemics—SARS-CoV-1, MERS, Ebola. His findings changed how the Tour de France organizers tested staff and riders last year. [Read more](#)

# Robert and Patricia Switzer Foundation Annual Financial Report

(FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2020)

The following financial data is based on an annual compilation of financial statements.

## SWITZER FOUNDATION MISSION

*The Robert and Patricia Switzer Foundation identifies and nurtures environmental leaders who have the ability and determination to make a significant impact, and supports initiatives that will have direct and measurable results to improve environmental quality. The foundation accomplishes this by awarding academic fellowships and project grants, sponsoring professional development activities, and fostering a growing network of Switzer Fellows, environmental practitioners and organizations.*

FINANCIAL STATEMENT	FY 2019	FY 2020
Assets (at market value)		
Common stocks	\$ 12,373,388	\$ 12,095,245
Fixed income & alternatives	5,373,322	5,384,941
Liquidity	877,279	823,774
Other assets (equipment)	27,640	20,760
Total assets	\$ 18,651,629	\$ 18,324,720
Liabilities and Equity		
Liabilities	\$ 206,218	\$ 189,933
Equity (unrestricted net assets)	18,445,411	18,134,787
Total liabilities and net assets	\$ 18,651,629	\$ 18,324,720

## STATEMENT OF REVENUE AND DISBURSEMENT

Income from Investments		
Interest income and dividends	\$ 347,851	\$ 328,651
Capital gains distribution	0	0
Realized gain/loss	813,370	(298,704)
Other income	1,168	0
Total operating revenues	\$ 1,162,389	\$ 29,947
Disbursements from Income		
Grants paid	\$ 336,000	\$ 312,818
Investment management expenses	78,720	74,122
Operating and admin expenses	720,439	555,823
Total expenses	\$ 1,135,159	\$ 942,763

### 2020 SWITZER FOUNDATION TRUSTEES:

Joe Aldy (Chair)  
Linda Switzer Clopton  
Scott Fruin  
Bruce Kahn  
Izzy Martin  
Laura Meyerson  
Rachel Morello-Frosch

### STAFF

Lauren Hertel, Communications Manager  
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Erin Lloyd, Program Director  
Sarah Reed, Executive Director

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