

Monday, April 26, 2010

## Director's Matters



### Increasing the diversity of our community

*Guest column by: Catherine O'Riordan, vice president, Physics Resources*

Diversity is a persistent goal for those of us working in the physical sciences. Our primary challenge here in the United States is to achieve equity in terms of gender and ethnic minorities. It may take decades of concerted effort for our community to become a demographic reflection of society, yet together we can do many things to increase the awareness of diversity issues and encourage the participation of underrepresented groups. This past week, the Physics Resources Center participated in several events to draw attention to diversity issues in our community.

Two Nobel laureates gave lectures and visited students as part of an AIP program sponsored by the [Research Corporation for Science Advancement](#). On April 16–17 [Wolfgang Ketterle](#)—who was recognized with a Nobel Prize in Physics in 2001 for his observation of Bose–Einstein condensation in a gas—interacted with students from 10 campuses, including minority-serving institutions, and presented a talk entitled "Superfluid Gases Near Absolute Zero Temperature." Ketterle participated in the student poster session and led a special Q&A session where he described his career choices and the importance of collaboration in fostering new ideas. His visit was part of the [joint meeting](#) at Elon University of the Society of Physics Students Zone 5 and the North Carolina Section of AAPT. As part of the same grant, AIP helped coordinate [Martin Chalfie's](#) three-day visit to Claflin University—a historically black institution in South Carolina—on April 19–21. Chalfie, who won the 2008 Nobel Prize in Chemistry and is chairman of the biological sciences department at Columbia University, presented a lecture on his landmark co-discovery of [green fluorescent protein](#) (GFP).



SPS student reporters from North Carolina A&T State University attend Wolfgang Ketterle's talk. Their report will be posted on the SPS website in the coming weeks.



Nobel laureate Martin Chalfie interacts with Claflin University science students during a poster session (left). Middle-school students (right) were also invited to meet Chalfie and attend his lecture.

On a different front for the same cause, several AIP staff members participated in a special session of the [159th ASA meeting](#), which took place April 19–23 in Baltimore, MD. ASA members Juan Arvelo—also active on the AIP Liaison Committee on Under-Represented Minorities—and Preston Wilson convened a session titled "Diversity Issues in Education in Acoustics." SPS program coordinator Kendra Rand and I presented an overview of the Nobel Laureate Lecture program and the SPS "[Future Faces of Physics](#)" initiative. Susan White, research manager for AIP's Statistical Research Center, presented data on acoustics degrees and employment in acoustics, and compared them with data from the ASA membership. White examined the demographics of ASA's membership and discussed implications for increasing diversity in acoustics. Also among the speakers was APS Education director Ted Hodapp, who described the new [Minority Bridge Program](#), which aims to significantly increase the number of students receiving doctorate degrees in physics who belong to underrepresented groups. The session concluded with a lively panel discussion on how to increase recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups both at universities and within ASA and other AIP Member and Affiliated Societies.

By working together and continually increasing diversity, we can make progress. Each step toward a more diverse physical sciences community helps science advance more rapidly, because of the innovative contributions from people who represent all walks of life.

## PRC MATTERS

### What is involved in getting a PhD abroad?



Anna Quider has met Professor Stephen Hawking several times throughout her time at Cambridge.

Anna Quider—an SPS member and past SPS Leadership Scholarship recipient—is a third-year graduate student in astrophysics at the University of Cambridge, UK. As a way of giving back to SPS, she has started a [blog](#) on the SPS website about her experiences as an American-trained student working abroad toward a physics PhD. Her first entry was last week, and there will be more to come.

Quider was awarded a Marshall Scholarship in 2007 and a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship in 2008. These awards allow her to pursue her doctorate in astrophysics at the [Institute of](#)

Astronomy (IoA) of the University of Cambridge, where she is currently in her final year. For her thesis research, under the direction of Professor Max Pettini, she uses the spectra of galaxies from the early universe to characterize the stars and gas in these galaxies by looking at, for example, their chemical composition, kinematics, and geometric configuration.

## AROUND AIP

### AIP announces date for open house

On Tuesday, September 21, AIP will hold its first open house to bring together staff from Melville, NY, and College Park, MD, for a day of learning and interaction.

The event will be held at the AIP Publishing Center in Melville, where staff can meet each other in person, and learn about all the products and services AIP supports. Each department will staff a display showcasing its members and functions. The exhibits can take many different forms—from posters to videos, flyers to PowerPoint presentations, quizzes to live demonstrations. Some may focus on recent achievements, while others may describe day-to-day tasks. All the material will be saved and posted online internally for future use. Please mark your calendars!

We invite your feedback to this newsletter via email to [aipmatters@aip.org](mailto:aipmatters@aip.org).

For past issues of this newsletter, visit the [AIP Matters archives](#).