

# Building the bridges with CSU Alumni through ΣΠΣ Induction Ceremony

**By Patrick Herron, Jordan Miller, George Tomaras, Collin Douglas, Jacob Forester, Kiril A Streletzky**

A typical ΣΠΣ Induction ceremony is a wonderful occasion for recognition of academic achievements of the top of a graduating physics class. However, it should be remembered that ΣΠΣ exists not only to honor outstanding scholarship in physics, but also to encourage interest in physics at all levels as well as to promote service, and to provide a fellowship of persons who have excelled in physics. With this in mind it is only logical for a school like CSU, whose ΣΠΣ chapter was dormant for almost 46 years, to expand its ΣΠΣ chapter membership by inducting alumni who have significantly contributed to a physics department, to physics scholarship, to physics fellowship, to physics general outreach and service. This approach has been taken by our chapter of ΣΠΣ since its resurrection in 2018 following ΣΠΣ Chapter Project Award. Every year we try to induct the very top of the physics class and alumni from recent and not-that recent years. We have a strong belief that this approach helps to build the bridges between our department, current students, and alumni from different walks of life who either have established themselves already or are on an exciting career trajectory. Different generations of alumni in multitude of professions, current and emeritus faculty, and students assembled together at the induction might not know each other well or at all, but they all have a common bond in our physics department. This bond creates an amazing synergy and atmosphere in the room not only provokes the exchange of ideas, solicitation for an advice, many laughs and jokes, but also leads to real job opportunities for current students and to service and fellowship opportunities for the alumni. This synergy created at an induction event with alumni in strengthens the department.



The 2022 ΣΠΣ induction ceremony took place on Friday, May 13, in the marvelous art-deco Panel Room of the Fenn Tower. It brought together more than 60 guests (students, faculty, alumni, and administration) for an evening of celebration of this year's physics awards, a physics faculty retirement, recognition of four honorary alumni who contributed heavily towards PhysCon 22 and an induction of eight new ΣΠΣ members, followed by an Italian buffet dinner.



The evening started with a reception during which guest had a chance to meet each other as well as CSU faculty students, explore a collection of several poster about SPS, Physics Department, CSU's REU and about 20 Physics Day posters that highlighted yearly departmental outreach event for middle and high school students. The opening remarks by Dr. S started the official portion of the evening. After welcoming the guests, Dr. S briefly talked about the threats to small physics programs around the country and thanked alumni for their help in latest round of fight for

the independent physics department. He then talked about national SPS and history of the CSU's SPS chapter showing pictures of the chapter leadership from more than 52 years.

Then Patrick (President-elect) and Jordan (treasurer) with some help from Dr. S discussed the state of CSU's SPS chapter and what SPS has been up to for the past year (Olympics, Jeopardy, other SPS events, and student conference travel) with a special focus on their recent "Physics Fridays" outreach done at Bio-Med Science Academy. Student expressed a hope to not only continue their outreach efforts over the next year but to expand the joy of physics to as many kids as possible! Dr. S also highlighted the 11-year history of the "Physics Fridays" outreach program of our chapter which was led through the years by several of the to-be-inductees and honorary guests. This part was concluded with Dr. S reviewing the achievements of our SPS chapter under the leaderships of the last two SPS presidents (Sam Tietjen and Andrew Scherer – both of whom were to be inducted).

In the next part of the ceremony, Dr. Fodor, the chair of the physics department, highlighted the state of the program and some of the recent achievements of the department itself. The highlights included faculty promotions and a faculty hire, faculty awards, recognition of Dr. S being elected as the president of the National Society of Physics Students, publications with undergraduate students, mentioning of student admittances to REU and grad schools, and student awards, including the Outstanding Physics Senior award and university-wide recognitions (Valedictorian). Dr. Fodor concluded his part by thanking alumni, who made the physics department the leader among all academic department of both money raised and number of donors on CSU's 2022 giving day. This portion of the evening was followed by presenting alumni-honorary guests who made significant PhysCon 22 contribution with personal CSU/Physics Dept gifts.



was followed by a group of current SPS officers (Jacob Forester, George Tomaras, Collin Douglas, Jordan Miller, and Patrick Herron) in describing speakers, tours, workshops, seminars of the PhysCon 2022 conference that they were very excited about. The students who presented already inspired other undergraduates to register for the conference as well!

Following Dr. Fodor's presentation, Dr. S talked in detail about the mission, the history, and four pillars of  $\Sigma\Pi\Sigma$ , highlighting the Physics Congress (PhysCon) as one of the key  $\Sigma\Pi\Sigma$  programs. Andrew Scherer (outgoing SPS president) then talked about his life-changing experience of attending PhysCon 2019 that led to his interest in Physical Oceanography. He



A wonderful evening of fellowship and presentations was concluded with the induction ceremony itself. Dr. S went over the 53-year history of CSU's ΣΠΣ chapter, its recent inductions, and the meaning of ΣΠΣ insignia and the red book as well as the responsibilities of the inductees. Then each of the eight new ΣΠΣ



members was introduced by either another CSU alum or Dr.S, inviting them to sign the CSU red book one by one. Each inductee was gifted a pin, a pen, and a membership card that signifies their becoming of a lifetime member of ΣΠΣ. Then the words of the Charge to New Members were read by Dr. Jearl Walker to the entire group. The 2022 inductees included: Dr. James Lock (CSU's physics professor emeritus), Tara Peppard '05 (CSU's physics lab manager), Janna Mino '15 (STEM Education Specialist in Ohio Dept of Education), Marie Blatnik '15 (PhD candidate in physics at CALTECH), Robert White '15 (Physics Instructor at CSU), Samantha Tietjen '20 (Barn manager and instructor), Angela Noreck '21 (PhD physics student at CWRU), Andrew Scherer '22 (PhD oceanography student at Oregon State).



The induction ceremony was closed by honoring Dr. Miron Kaufman's retirement and celebrating his 36 years (and counting) at Cleveland State University and 12 years as a chair of the Physics Department. Happy Retirement Dr. Kaufman!



The guests were then invited for a group pictures and served an Italian buffet dinner which stimulated many conversations and networking between students, alumni, and faculty.