

APS Forum on Graduate Student Affairs November 2007 Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 2 (11/1/2007)

Contents

- Introduction
- Report from CAM 2007 Graduate Student Conference
- FGSA Graduate Admissions Survey
- 2008 APS March and April Meeting Programming
- Non-traditional Career Profiles
- Lobbying for APS Members
- FGSA Election Announcement

Introduction

Welcome to the second issue of the FGSA electronic newsletter. This issue summarizes recent FGSA activities, as well as new activities that FGSA members can become involved in. In addition to a summary of CAM 2007 and our new profiles of non-traditional physics careers, we are announcing a new survey on the graduate admissions process. Also included in this issue is a report on how APS members (and FGSA members in particular) can become involved in science policy issues. All FGSA members are encouraged to participate in the survey and utilize the APS political action resources outlined here. Also, FGSA members who are interested in getting more involved with the Forum are encouraged to run for an office. Read the election announcement at the end of the newsletter to learn about what positions are up for election, and what the associated responsibilities are.

We'd like to hear from you! If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please contact the FGSA board at gradst@aps.org.

Report from CAM 2007

The CAM (Canada-America-Mexico) physics graduate student conferences are modeled after general audience meetings sponsored by the CAP (Canadian Association of Physicists), APS (American Physical Society) and SMF (Sociedad Mexicana de Fisica) that took place in the nineties. CAM gives graduate students an opportunity to attend a unique conference planned by and for them. Moreover, participants learn about recent findings in the various subfields of physics and are able to discuss concerns particular to physicists in the early stages of their careers. In addition, these meetings allow for the promotion of international collaborations among the North American countries and for students to develop an appreciation of the different experiences of graduate students from across North America.

The first CAM graduate student conference was held in the fall of 2003 in Merida, Mexico and was attended by approximately 100 students from throughout North America. The second CAM graduate student physics conference, held in August 2005 in San Diego, attracted more than 100 attendees. This year, nearly 150 participants registered for the Third CAM Conference held August 8-11 at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. This Conference included plenary talks on a variety of subjects, including particle physics, biophysics, and astronomy, as well as a lively roundtable discussion on the topic of "Problems and Solutions for the Next Generation of Physicists". A majority of the attendees presented talks in parallel sessions throughout the conference, highlighting many current research projects underway at universities throughout North America.

The opportunities for networking and collaboration did not end with the close of the oral presentations each day, however. The evening poster session also gave the students an opportunity to discuss in a more informal setting the details of their Master's or Ph.D. research. This event was extremely well attended, and it gave many participants the access to new and exciting results from wide assortment of their fellow graduate students. The conference banquet at a local micro-brew pub also afforded students the opportunity to engage with their colleagues in a laid-back, social setting. There was also ample opportunity throughout the conference to take in the experiences that Montreal, the host city, had to offer.

While the four-day conference certainly had its share of interesting and intriguing presentations, perhaps the most important and lasting effect of the conference will be the fostering of international understanding, cooperation, and collaboration among the participants throughout their entire scientific careers.

FGSA Graduate Admissions Survey

The FGSA is conducting a survey about the graduate admissions experience. The FGSA recently received some complaints about the graduate admissions process and we would like to determine whether these were isolated incidents or are indicative of a more widespread problem. The FGSA is committed to working with universities to develop a smooth admissions process; the results

of this survey will guide us in this effort. The results of the survey will also be used to put together an online graduate admissions guide for future graduate students.

If you have an admissions horror story, or if you think admissions was the easiest part of grad school (or both), we want to hear about it. The survey is currently open and closes on November 30th. Help future graduate students by sharing your experiences at "http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=TmH7_2bMsipogmjH0C3VTYzg_3d_3d"

2008 APS March and April Meeting Programming

FGSA is currently planning our sessions for the APS March and April meetings in 2008 and more information will be available in the coming months.

The March meeting will be held March 10-14, 2008 in New Orleans, Louisiana. FGSA will be co-sponsoring a session with the Forum on Physics and Society on recovering from a natural disaster, focusing on the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and its effects on students and their universities. The session will be titled "Lessons learned from Katrina: How to prepare a department for catastrophic events," and is scheduled for March 13, 2008 at 11:15am.

Also at the March meeting, the Committee on the Status of Women in Physics and FGSA will be co-sponsoring a session on family and career issues entitled "Where is the Center of Mass for Family, Career, and Self?" The time and date for this session is to be determined.

The April meeting will be held April 12-15, 2008 in St. Louis, MO. The Forum on Physics and Society and FGSA will be co-sponsoring a session on electoral politics and scientists running for elected office. FGSA will be sponsoring an additional session at the April meeting, with the subject to be determined.

Non-traditional Career Profiles

FGSA has compiled a number of interviews with physicists who are in non-traditional careers, outside of academia and government labs. The interviews can be found here: <http://units.aps.org/units/fgsa/careers/> and include a AAAS Fellow now working at the Exploratorium, a "quant" in Chicago, public policy careers, and scientists working in industry. Suggestions for potential interviewees are welcome and should be directed to Meghan Anzelc, FGSA Chair-Elect.

Congressional Visit: Lobbying by APS Members

Ten years ago, APS established a Washington Office to represent membership interests with Congress and the federal government. Members of FGSA can play a critical supporting role for Washington Office activities, particularly for research budget and education issues. As the next generation of the science workforce, we are an important and unique voice. Becoming involved in science policy is a great opportunity to learn about how our Universities and labs have been supported. The APS lobbying effort provides for members to sign letters during APS meetings on issues related to science policy, send emails to Congress, and visit their congressional delegation on Capitol Hill and at home. FGSA officers have represented student interests by attending the annual congressional visits held for unit officers during APS unit convocation. We hope all fellow members will realize value of these lobbying efforts and help to secure science research funding that we all depend on. The public affairs office offers assistance in preparing for meetings with lawmakers, such as requesting meetings, providing tips for achieving objectives in a meeting, and finding information about congressmen and senators. For more information visit <http://www.aps.org/policy/> or contact Steve Pierson at the APS Washington Office: opa@aps.org

FGSA Election Announcement

It's about that time again --- FSGA Elections are coming up!!! Annual FSGA Elections will take place in December for the following positions:

Chair-elect:

The Chair-Elect will serve as the Chair of the Program Committee. In addition, the Chair-Elect will assume the duties of the Chair whenever the Chair is unable to perform them.

Treasurer:

The Treasurer will have responsibility for all funds in the custody of or placed at the disposal of the FGSA, and will authorize disbursements from these funds for FGSA expenses. The Treasurer will present a financial report and an annual budget at the meeting of the Executive Committee

APS Council Representative:

Due to increased participation in the FGSA by APS members, the Forum will, for the first time, elect a Representative to the APS Council. As a representative of FGSA, the Councilor will attend the APS Council meetings (generally held twice annually), and will participate in the Council's decision-making and overall Society governance. The Council Representative will serve as a liaison between the Council and the Executive Committee of the Forum.

International Student Affairs Officer:

The primary task of the International Student Affairs Officer is to serve as the US Representative to the International Organizing Committee for the Canada-America-Mexico (CAM) Physics Graduate Student Conference, held once every two years. Additionally, the ISA Officer will work with the APS International Affairs Office on any additional projects of interest to the FGSA. This position is held for two years.

Member-at-large (2 positions):

No specific duties are assigned to members-at-large, but they play an important role in helping the Executive Committee of the Forum function.

A call for nominations will be going out to forum members in the next few weeks. If you are interested in getting involved with the APS and the FSGA, this is a great opportunity.