

# UM Department of Physics and Astronomy

## FEBRUARY 1, 2025

### DEPARTMENT NEWS



#### STUDENT NEWS

##### Xinyue Gong: PhD Dissertation Defense

Xinyue successfully defended her PhD dissertation on December 14. Xinyue's dissertation titled "Hall effect of angular momentum-carrying acoustic waves interacting with metasurfaces" is about the work in which she observed the acoustic Hall effect for the first time. Xinyue's advisor is Dr. Likun Zhang.

##### Aniket Khairnar: First Paper as First Author Published

Aniket's first paper as first author, "[Approximate helical symmetry in compact binaries](#)" was published in Physical Review D. Congratulations to Aniket on a great accomplishment.

##### Current SPS Officers

The current SPS officers are Kaylyn Beard (President), Isen Furr (Vice-President), Elizabeth Goreth (Social Media Officer), Nathaniel Carlson (Outreach/Treasurer) and Byron Villacorta Peralta (Secretary). SPS meets on Tuesdays at 12:30 pm.

#### FEATURED ALUMNI

[Dr. Vera Sazonova](#) graduated with a BS in Physics and a BS in Computer Science in 2000. She went on to get a PhD from Cornell University in 2006. She is currently a Senior Machine Learning Engineer at SafeGraph in Barcelona, Spain.

[Dr. Michael Oelze](#) graduated with a PhD in Physics in 2000. He is currently a Professor of Biomedical and Translational Sciences in the Carle Illinois College of Medicine at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. His research is on ultrasound imaging, therapy and devices.



Dr. Cecille Labuda gives the plenary talk at the CUW\*iP 2025 in Memphis, TN.

#### General Department News

##### Message from the Chair

Dear Physics Department,

It's wonderful to feel the bustle and energy return to Lewis Hall as we start a new semester. I am thrilled to step into the role of Chair of Physics and Astronomy. I'm looking forward to interacting with everyone over the next few months. Don't be shy about dropping by to chat with me. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Bombelli for his incredible leadership, dedication, and tireless efforts over many years. Dr. Bombelli has navigated our department into very favorable terrain, and I am excited to continue on this journey with all of you. As we embark on a new semester, I want to wish our students, faculty, and staff a fantastic Spring term. I hope you're all excited about your classes and research and that you're ready to participate in and get the most out of group meetings, journal clubs, colloquia, social events, and outreach opportunities. Let's continue to push the boundaries of physics knowledge, support each other's growth, and make this a memorable and successful semester. Here's to new discoveries, impactful research, and a vibrant academic community.

Cheers,

Kevin Beach

- Dr. Gavin Davies is the new Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC) for the department. Students may contact him on the #gpc Slack channel, directly on Slack or by email.
- Dr. Cecille Labuda gave a plenary talk at the [2025 Conferences for Undergraduate Women and Gender Minorities in Physics](#) (CU\*iP) in the Memphis, TN site. The conferences took place from February 24 – 26, 2025.

#### Events and Announcements

- This year has been designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as the [International Year of Quantum Science and Technology](#) to recognize the 100<sup>th</sup> year of quantum mechanics. The opening ceremony will take place at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France, from February 4 – 5 and can be live streamed [here](#).
- The Astronomy Public Talk series organized by Dr. Anuradha Gupta continues on Saturday, February 15th, at 4:00 PM in Lewis 101 with a talk by Purnima Narayan on "The Great Planetary Alignment of 2025" about the planet parade visible in the night sky in January and February and how to view it.