

April 01, 2025

UM Department of Physics and Astronomy



Undergraduates Andrew Scholz, Connor Bryan and Elizabeth Goreth in the new Undergraduate Student Lounge

GENERAL DEPARTMENT NEWS

- Dr. Jake Bennett ran a Belle II Masterclass on March 25th which was attended by about 60 physics and engineering students and teachers from high schools in Oxford, Batesville, and Louisville, MS. Masterclass groups in Italy, Poland, and Iowa State also connected remotely. The students were introduced to the basics of particle physics and did hands-on analysis with real data from Belle II to measure properties of various particles. The masterclass included other research-related activities
- Drs. Luca Bombelli, Cecille Labuda and Nick MacDonald were awarded a Summer Undergraduate Research Group Grant (SURGG) from the UM Office of Research and Economic Development (ORED). The grant will fund a summer research program for 3 undergraduate students.
- Dr. Gavin Davies has been awarded tenure and promotion to Associate Professor of Physics and Astronomy effective July 1. Congratulations on this major achievement!
- Dr. Cecille Labuda was elected to membership of the honour society Phi Kappa Phi as a faculty member contributing in a significant way to the intellectual life of the university. Founded in 1897, Phi Kappa Phi is the nation's oldest and most selective collegiate honor society for all academic disciplines. The initiation ceremony will be on April 3rd.
- Dr. Leo Stein was chosen as a Kavli Fellow joining a select group of top scientists. The National Academy of Sciences announced his selection as one of only eighty-eight of the nation's brightest young scientists from industry, academia, and government to take part in the U.S. and international Kavli Frontiers of Science symposia for 2025.

EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The Undergraduate Student Lounge for majors and minors, Room 103B, is open giving undergraduates a space of their own in the department. Our thanks to the College of Liberal Arts (in particular, Associate Dean Holly Reynolds) for funding the project and bringing it to fruition, and to previous chair Dr. Luca Bombelli for making it a department priority.
- "Hey, What'cha doing?" is a new PGSA event which lets researchers in the physics department explain what day to day work is like within their research group. The event takes place every other Wednesday at noon. The next one will be one on April 2nd.

STUDENT NEWS

Madusanka Abeykoon: Data Analyst Position

Madusanka was hired as a Data Analyst in UM ORED. Responsibilities will include implementing data science pipelines for biomedical research projects. He will start after graduation this spring.

Subhayu Bagchi, Kovida Goonathilake and Amitesh Singh: Talks at SPAGSS 2025

Subhayu, Kovida and Amitesh gave talks at the Southern Physics and Astronomy Graduate Student Symposium (SPAGSS) in Tuscaloosa, AL. Auburn University, Mississippi State University, University of Alabama Huntsville, University of Memphis and University of Mississippi were invited to the symposium.

Logan Benninghoff: Belle II Masterclass Hands-On Session Leader

Logan led one of the Belle II Masterclass hands-on sessions that took place on March 25th. The students attending were divided into two groups and learned how to do analyses with Belle II data.

Kaylyn Beard, Walker Coon, Elizabeth Goreth, Jackson Puleo and Andrew Scholz: ΣΠΣ

Kaylyn, Walker, Elizabeth, Jackson and Andrew accepted membership in Sigma Pi Sigma (ΣΠΣ), the physics honour society. Membership is limited to students with high achievement, who have completed at least 9 hours at the 300+ level and who have been involved with extracurricular activities such as research and outreach.

Purnima Narayan: 2024 - 2025 Class Marshal

Purnima was selected as a class marshal for the 2025 doctoral class. She will make a speech in the Doctoral Hooding Ceremony.