

Conferences for Undergraduate Women in Physics Confirm Their Success  
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More than 1200 young women from colleges across the US came together in January to learn about careers, graduate school and research opportunities in a range of fields associated with physics. The participants attended one of nine regional events, held on 15–17 January, under the aegis of the American Physical Society and dubbed the Conferences for Undergraduate Women in Physics (CUWiP).

The first CUWiP conference was held in 2006 at the University of Southern California. Interest in the event took root and it has grown every year since. The 2016 CUWiP events were held at Black Hills State University, Georgia Institute of Technology, Ohio State University, ODU/Jefferson Lab, Oregon State University, Syracuse University, University of California (San Diego), University of Texas (San Antonio) and Wesleyan University.

In the US mid-Atlantic region, Old Dominion University (Norfolk) and the Department of Energy's Jefferson Lab (Newport News, Virginia) co-hosted one of the geographically separated conferences. Nearly 140 women and four men attended the ODU/Jefferson Lab conference, which included workshops, panel discussions, lectures, a student poster session, graduate school and careers fair, and Jefferson Lab tour.

“The value of the conference is in showing undergraduate women that in spite of classroom numbers, they are not alone, and that there are many role models for them,” commented Gail Dodge, a professor of physics at ODU and co-chair for the joint ODU/JLab conference. “They particularly appreciated career advice, both from the panel discussions and the graduate school and careers fair. We want these women to know they have many options and that there are many ways to be a physicist.”

According to Latifa Elouadrhiri, Jefferson Lab staff scientist and ODU/Jefferson Lab co-chair, the conference programme was designed with the goal of giving the students an opportunity to experience the dynamics of a professional physics conference. It also provided them with the opportunity to meet and network with other women in physics at many different levels – peers, graduate students, postdocs, faculty, researchers and leaders of technical projects and institutions – both in academia and industry. Through the graduate school and careers fair, with 32 institutions and employers represented, the students became more aware of the wide variety of opportunities available to them.

“It was very exciting to be in a room with so many women physicists, seeing the lively dialogue between the students and senior women as well as the interactions between the students, discussing physics questions and career opportunities,” Elouadrhiri said. “Jefferson Lab and ODU are committed to increasing the representation of women in physics. We hope that hosting this conference has a positive impact on the young women who attended and helps them in making informed decisions about their future.”

- For further information, see <https://www.aps.org/programs/women/workshops/cuwip.cfm>.