



SOCIETY OF PHYSICS STUDENTS

An organization of the American Institute of Physics

Future Faces of Physics Award Proposal

Project Proposal Title	Pride in Physics: Nurturing Curiosity, Fostering Inclusivity
Name of School	University of Central Florida
SPS Chapter Number	SPS 1076
Total Amount Requested	\$600

Abstract

SPS-UCF will host an event to celebrate diversity, empowerment, and to probe curiosity alongside homeless LGBTQ+ youth from the Zebra Youth coalition. We seek to inspire underrepresented groups through interactive discussions from SPS members, followed by talks from UCF faculty, Dr. James Cooney and Robinson Observatory director, Dr. Richard Jerousek.

Proposal Statement

Overview of Proposed Project/Activity/Event

Located in the heart of downtown Orlando, The Center Orlando is a hub for LGBTQ+ advocacy in close partnership with nationally recognized nonprofit organization, Zebra Youth. They offer refuge for Florida's homeless LGBTQ+ youth ages 13-24, guiding them towards stability. Zebra Youth's mission aligns with our goal of providing emotional and educational support, and by leveraging the exciting world of physics we hope to empower these individuals and promote a sense of belonging. This event is motivated by the urgent need to address the unique challenges faced by Orlando's LGBTQ+ youth, particularly those experiencing homelessness and discrimination. Strengthening the ties between the University of Central Florida and Zebra Youth will provide a supportive network for LGBTQ+ youth interested in pursuing careers in STEM; these connections will be showcased by representation of the University of Central Florida's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the event which will take place at The Center Orlando.

This event will feature an evening of engaging astrophysics discussions led by undergraduate and graduate SPS members, guest speakers, Dr. Richard Jerousek, with personal ties to Zebra Youth, and astrophysics professor Dr. James Cooney. Then, a break for refreshments and food will be provided with an opportunity to observe the night sky through telescopes generously provided by the UCF's Robinson Observatory as the close of our event. We anticipate a diverse audience of 50-100 attendees in person.

Our SPS chapter has proven to be well-equipped to host events like this, previously hosting guest speaker Dr. Simone Hyater-Adams to advocate for traditionally underrepresented groups in physics. This event received overwhelmingly positive feedback from the Women in Physics Society and graduate students in attendance, describing its impact as inspirational and eye opening to the struggles of their peers in underrepresented groups. We hope to meet our goal as a chapter, to host this event and continue the tradition of elevating diverse and minority voices in our department and our community. Our faculty advisors, Dr. Costas Efthimiou and Dr. Adrienne Dove, both have expertise in hosting events such as this one and will be available to guide us through any problems or technical issues that may arise. We have additional support from our university's Robinson Observatory director, Dr. Richard Jerousek, and resources available from our university's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

How Proposed Activity Promotes Physics Across Cultures

By connecting with underrepresented populations, we can foster valuable perspectives within the scientific community. Diversity in the scientific community leads to an abundance of rich ideas to help further our physical knowledge of the world. We promote this by providing education for free with the LGBTQ+ homeless populations through our talks and hands-on telescope observation activities. This will aid in reminding LGBTQ+ populations that

they have a place in the scientific community no matter what struggles they have faced, and they have the same potential of being a successful physicist just as any other population.

Plan for Carrying Out Proposed Project/Activity/Event

This project will be led by SPS member Caden Zaccardi, and SPS secretary, Kirsten Lina, with help from the officer board and volunteering members of the Society of Physics Students at UCF. This event will also be held in collaboration with the university's Robinson Observatory, Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, our SPS faculty advisors, and the physics department chair as needed.

The event is to be implemented in multiple stages over the course of several months, guaranteeing thorough organization and outreach. In the first phase, Kirsten and Caden will establish connections with The Center Orlando and Zebra Youth coalition to organize the event and gain their support. Building the relationship with these organizations is crucial to understanding the unique needs of their LGBTQ+ youth community, ensuring the event is tailored to be both educational and culturally sensitive. Caden Zaccardi and Kirsten Lina will manage reservation of the event space through The Center Orlando and marketing to the community via the Zebra Youth coalition through their appropriate channels. The second stage involves collaboration with our keynote speakers including director of Robinson Observatory, Dr. Richard Jerousek, UCF Associate Lecturer, Dr. James Cooney, and a representative from UCF's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Their collaboration contributes to the event's credibility and outreach effectiveness. To maximize attendance and impact, SPS-UCF will launch an advertising campaign across various channels, including social media, campus networks, and other registered student organizations, like the Society for the Advancement of Minorities in STEM. The SPS-UCF members will also be involved in this event either as a volunteer, discussion leader or an attendee, many of whom are experienced with volunteering in previous SPS chapter events. The final phase is the event itself, an evening beginning with physics lightning discussions led by SPS members, followed by a break for dinner and refreshments, our keynote speakers will give their talks and all will join outside for night sky observations with the telescopes generously lent by UCF's Robinson Observatory. We will provide an exit survey to our attendees for their personal perspectives on the successfulness of the event, and to provide general feedback on event activities. We hope to utilize this information to continue fostering an inclusive environment within our chapter, department, university, and community.

Project/Activity/Event Timeline

November 2023 - February 2024: Connect with The Center Orlando and Zebra Youth to organize and gain support for the event.

February 2024 - April 2024: Connect and organize with Dr. Richard Jerousek at UCF's Robinson Observatory and a representative from the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

February 2024 - April 2024: Advertise the event, collect attendee information.

April 2024 - May 2024: Host event, review attendee feedback, submit Final Report to SPS National.

Activity Evaluation Plan

We will be providing an exit survey to serve as an attendance form, allowing us to gauge the impact of our event and understand how many individuals within the LGBTQ+ youth community we are able to reach. We intend to gather valuable feedback that will be crucial in helping us evaluate our execution of the event and how we may improve for future gatherings. The design of the survey will kindly ask for information about their current education, interest in pursuing stem related careers, and general feedback on event activities. Their perspectives play a key role in enhancing the quality of our programs and tailoring future events to meet the interests and needs of our community.

Budget Justification

We are requesting funding of \$600 for this event. The FFOP will be the only funding source for this event. The budget will be used for renting of event space at The Center Orlando. We are allocating funds as an honorarium for our guest speaker and director of the University of Central Florida's Robinson Observatory, Dr. Richard Jerousek, to compensate them for their time, resources, and commitment to this event. The other portion of the budget will be used to provide refreshments and food to our attendees.