UW Physics welcomed over 160 undergraduates from the Pacific Northwest to the APS Conference for Undergraduate Women in Physics

Submitted by Shane D Debolt on January 31, 2019 - 9:26am

On the weekend of Martin Luther King Day, UW Physics welcomed over 160 undergraduates from the Pacific Northwest to the APS Conference for Undergraduate Women in Physics.

At the conference, the attendees heard plenary talks on science and career trajectories from Dr. Mary James, Professor of Physics and Dean of Institutional Diversity Reed College, Alison Yates, the founder and CEO of Knitrino, and Dr. Emily Schaller, Science and Education Project Manager for the National Suborbital Research Center at the NASA Ames Research Center.

Research is an important part of a physicist's journey; attendees had the chance to present posters of their research to their peers, and to the conference presenters who served as judges. In addition, they could learn about how to apply for research opportunities from UW Associate Vice Provost Janice deCosmo.

The conference is intended to raise awareness of the opportunities in physics as well as give students access to the tools and support needed to succeed. Other sessions included topics such as how to succeed in grad school, looking for a job, and mental health in physics. Later on Saturday, attendees participated in a career fair with 19 companies, scientific non-profit organizations, and academic programs.

The conference also highlighted issues of equity and inclusion; workshops included “Intersecting Identities” on race and gender in STEM, debunking stereotypes, and building an inclusive community.

“I feel so inspired and hopeful for continuing my journey in science,” one attendee recorded in a reflection. “Being around so many women in physics is encouraging and helps me feel a sense of belonging and acceptance.”

“It’s been so great to hear successful women physicists’ journeys to where they are,” said another. “It has helped me be less anxious about my own uncertainties.”

The conference also featured UW's first-ever Physics Slam! Five members of the UW Physics community competed for the audience's favor by presenting their research in a quick, fun, understandable way. The event was very well-attended by members of the public in
addition to the attendees of the conference.

Over 75 members of the department volunteered during the conference! Their help was invaluable, to the local organizers and to the attendees. We wish all CUWIP participants success on their journeys in physics!

People Involved:  Kai-Mei Fu

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