

## SPS Zone 18 meeting Report

University of Southern California, April 13<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup>, 2007

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For the first time in many years, the SPS Zone 18 meeting was hosted in Los Angeles. This location offered an excellent opportunity for the chapters within the Southern California area to attend. The event was a joint meeting between Zone 18 and the Southern California section of the AAPT. The two groups were almost equally represented with approximately 30 SPS students and 40 AAPT members. Although AAPT attendees were from a large number of schools, the majority of SPS

attendees were from a few Northern California schools including CSU Chico, CSU Sacramento, a large number from CSU Fresno, and a few representatives from USC itself. The students who did attend enjoyed several excellent demos, talks, and other entertainment.



Enjoying Southern California



SPS and AAPT members



Steve Wilburn's demos

The meeting began Friday, April 13<sup>th</sup> with pizza and a movie. We had an informal welcome for Chico and Sacramento who arrived on time to see the film "Serenity" which was one of the first films we had seen that had silent explosions in space. This was a refreshing change for sci-fi movies. Fresno arrived just as we were closing down however they decided they could have their own social event by absorbing some of the local culture of Los Angeles.

The Saturday morning scheduled lab tours unfortunately had to be cancelled due to a shortage of researchers willing to stay on the weekend, so instead we had a very good presentation by Dr. Haas on the USC Physics department, and introductions by the



Jamie Vargas from CSU Fresno

attendees. The Zone Councilor and AZC also gave a brief sales talk for joining the SPS national organization and the 2008  $\Sigma\Pi\Sigma$  congress. By 10 am the AAPT members joined us and we began the talks. The Saturday schedule can be seen at <http://www.csupomona.edu/~scaapt/meetings/2007mtg1spr/program.htm>. The only student talk of the day was “Astronomy in the Central Valley” by Jamie Vargas of CSU Fresno. He described the work their university had done through a recently constructed observatory in the area. Steve Wilburn, also from Fresno presented several excellent demos. These included turning glass into a conductor through heating, and turning solder into a spring using liquid nitrogen. I think by far the most enthusiastic speaker had to be the Chair at USC, professor Werner Däppen who spoke on “The Role of Physics in Astronomy” and vice versa.



A very long lunch



SPS Poster Session

Lunch was catered by Togo’s and featured table length sandwiches for all the participants to share. This was a very convenient way to serve lunch quickly to a group without requiring early registration. During lunch the SPS poster session was open for viewing in the lobby of the adjacent building. After lunch attendees participated in a workshop lead by our Zone Councilor, Dr. William DeGraffenreid on “Teaching Professionalism to Undergraduates” as well as a visit to the USC nanotechnology lab.



Absorbing local culture

After the conclusion of the SCAAPT meeting portion of the meeting at 4 pm, SPS members enjoyed a bonus talk by the USC SPS advisor, Dr. Gene Bickers, on “What’s Hot in Physics 2007”. This officially concluded the zone meeting however about half of the attendees continued discussions over dinner at the beach in Santa Monica for the evening. After a final walk around the pier we all were willing to call it a night.

Sunday was the long drive home for Fresno, Sacramento, and Chico, however a few of us squeezed in a few hours at the California Science Center (CSC) to check out the special exhibit on Star Wars. This made for a fun conclusion to the weekend and enabled participants to go home with a souvenir from the meeting, a full size cardboard storm-trooper to call their own.



A souvenir from the CSC