

# Boston University's 2009 SPS Zone 1 Meeting Final Report

14 April 2009

On March 27 and 28 of 2009, Boston University's SPS chapter hosted the SPS Zone 1 meeting. Sixty-four students, as well as three faculty members from our Zone attended the meeting and it was a great success. Of these sixty-four attendees, five students gave short talks on their undergraduate research and eight presented posters.

A key part of our success was our Zone meeting website. We had it up and running very early (mid January), complete with a registration page. We advertised by sending emails containing fliers and a link to our website to SPS presidents and mentors, as well as by sending emails directly to some physics departments in Boston. We did not charge a registration fee, and our registration deadline was one full month before our meeting date.

Our early registration deadline turned out to be incredibly helpful. Firstly, we were able to organize a conference discount at a nearby hotel for attendees who did not want to sleep on our couches and floors. Also, with such an early registration deadline, students did not put off registering for our meeting. This allowed us to plan our Zone meeting knowing approximately how many people would come.

After our experiences hosting a Zone meeting, we recommend having a registration fee. One problem that we encountered was that we had 85 students registered for our meeting and 65 arrivals. We think that a registration fee would help defray the cost of such a large meeting, and it would help to ensure that those who registered actually came (its surprising how much people care about even just a few dollars).

Upon arrival, students received folders containing our schedule of events, small notepads, pens, nametags, biographies for our speakers and panelists, and abstracts for



all of the student talks and poster presentations. We provided both breakfast and lunch on Saturday, and we encouraged all of our panelists and speakers to join us for lunch.

Another key part of our success was our schedule, which was also posted on our website early in the planning process. We had a jam-packed meeting full of activities and talks. On Saturday we had two lectures by BU professors. Professor Rick Averitt shared with us some of his knowledge about solid state experimental physics in his talk entitled *The Electrodynamics of Metamaterials: The Role of Anisotropy*. Professor Ed Kearns talked about *Physics Underground*, giving students insight into what's going on today in neutrino research.

We also invited four career panelists who hold PhD's in physics and have a variety of professions. Our career panel took place immediately before lunch, so that students might have something to talk with the panelists about during lunch. The panelists introduced themselves, and then we opened the floor for questions from the students. Many attendees reported that it was very nice to hear from physicists who were not just in academia, as this is an opportunity that students rarely have. Panelists were easier to find than we initially thought. We found Terry Russel, CEO of Makoto Life Sciences, and Bill Herzog, who works in Laser Technology at Lincoln Labs, through our physics department. Both received their PhD's at Boston University. One of our other panelists, Tulika Bose is a new professor here at BU. Finally, Dr. Thomas Olsen came to our meeting from the Education Division of the American Institute of Physics and was glad to take part in our panel. It was great to have these physicists and professionals share their experiences with us.

The final event on Saturday was a graduate student panel. Six BU graduate students and one from MIT came to answer student's questions. Many attendees thought that this was the most fun and helpful event at our meeting. In planning the event, we picked panelists with a variety of backgrounds. Some of the grad student panelists took time off between college and grad school, while others went straight through. Some studied particle physics, others solid state, and still others astrophysics. All of our graduate student panelists were fun and helpful and excited to be a part of our SPS Zone meeting.

Though our SPS meeting was lots of fun and very successful, we made a few mistakes that we would like to pass on to future Zone meeting planners. It is a good idea to confirm all student talks and poster presentations the week before the meeting. If possible, it would also be helpful to confirm attendance of all registrants as well. We recommend ordering a little bit more lunch than breakfast, since many people don't show up early enough for breakfast. Also, if you live in a big city, try to have some arrangements for parking. We think it would have been nice to invite and encourage some random graduate students to join for lunch (they always like free food). It would have been nice to have a post-conference survey to hand out at the end of the meeting, but you should also know that after lunch time, attendees tend to trickle away. It would also be a great idea to make sure that people from your own chapter are staying behind after the activities to help clean up. Most importantly, have fun with it!

Photon would like to thank our advisor, Professor Rob Carey for his support and for helping us with all of the logistics of planning our meeting. We would also like to thank Winna Sommers, the secretary in the physics front office, who was key in making this meeting possible. Finally, we are very grateful to Boston University's Physics Department Chairman, Professor Claudio Rebbi, for the incredible financial and moral support that was offered for the 2009 SPS Zone 1 Meeting.

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