

SPS Zone 9 Meeting Report

November 20-21, 2009

Seven schools from zones 9 and 11 were represented by the 27 people in attendance at the SPS Zone Meeting hosted by Augustana College in Rock Island, IL. The theme, "Galileo vs. Einstein," sparked talks from Dr. Ken Gayley of the University of Iowa and Dr. Lee Carkner from Augustana, but the weekend started off with demos; a collection of demos we use for outreach, as well as some more advanced demos like the quantum analog and the optical transmission of music from an ipod. The aim of this session was discourse; we wanted to share some of our techniques in outreach as well as get feedback from new visiting students. The first evening continued with Dr. Ken Gayley's talk, "Galileo vs. Einstein," which shared the differences in theory and ideology brought about by the two scientists, and was an intriguing recap of the changes in scientific thought from Galileo to Einstein. Finally, we visited the Carl Gamble observatory on campus for open viewing.

On Saturday morning, we began with refreshments and student presentations. Eddie Moldanado from the University of Northern Iowa presented his poster, "Studying the sensitivity of bullet impact on common and novel protective vest structures". Louis Daudet from Augustana presented his poster "Extinction Ratio Measurement for Ultrafast Lasers". Kyle Weigand from Augustana gave a ten minute talk, "Pulsed Light Using a Semiconductor Saturable Absorber Mirror".

Around noon on Saturday, Dr. Carkner from Augustana gave his talk "Galileo's Observations and Beyond!" This talk was an entertaining summary of the major developments in astronomy over the last 500 years. Dr. Carkner started with discussion on the early developments of heliocentric theory, and concluded with more recent studies involving general relativity and black holes.

The meeting was concluded with lunch and Einstein vs. Galileo trivia. This gave students a chance to have some interactive fun after a long day of presentations. Around 2:30, visiting students took off for their respective schools, and the meeting was concluded.