

St. John's University ΣΠΣ Chapter Induction Ceremony

**Honoring Dr. Robert W. Finkel's Over 40 Years of
Physics Career**



St. John's University
Jamaica, NY
April 8, 2015

St. John's University Chapter of Sigma Pi Sigma held its annual Induction Ceremony on Wednesday, April 8th of 2015 in Bent Hall 277 A/B. A total of nine new members were inducted to Sigma Pi Sigma. The event also honored over 40 years of service of Dr. Robert W. Finkel, Professor and Chair Emeritus of the St. John's University Physics Department, connected physics alumni with current students and local high school students through a physics jeopardy and alumni's sharing of their education and career experience. More than seventy people attended this year's induction ceremony including: six local high school students, eleven physics alumni, around twenty current students of St. John's University including the inductees, more than twenty family members and friends of students and alumni, and thirteen faculty and staff members. While Dr. Finkel, who now resides in Washington, D.C., could not make to the Induction Ceremony, he kindly agreed to meet the audience via Skype and say a few words to the students.



The alumni attendees of the event were (standing from left to right): Dr. Mostafa Sadoqi (chair of physics department), Mr. Andrew Parkes, Mr. William Lamberti, Mrs. Caroline Lamberti, Mr. John Gienau, Mr. Pasquale Tolomeo, Mr. Damon Urso, Mr. Bill Lauto, Mr. Simon Odie, and Ms. Emily Lavelle. Sitting in the chair was Mr. Kingsley Joseph. Another alumni guest Amish Khalfan was absent from the photo.

The eleven alumni attendees of the event were: Mr. John Gienau (B.S., '09), teacher at the Queens School of Inquiry; Mr. Kingsley Joseph (B.S., '10), Medical Physics student at Hofstra University; Dr. Amish Khalfan (B.S., '02), Assistant Professor at the CUNY LaGuardia Community College; Mr. William Lamberti (B.S., '85), Researcher/Physicist at Exxon Mobil; Mrs. Caroline Lamberti (B.S., '86); Mr. Bill Lauto, Environmental Scientist, Energy & Sustainability Consultant and President of his own consulting firm, Going True Green; Ms. Emily Lavelle (B.S., '03), Attorney, The Law Offices of Dominick W. Lavelle; Mr. Simon Odie (B.S., '08), Electrical Design Engineer/Supervisor, Con Edison; Mr. Andrew Parkes (B.S., '04), Building Manager and Physics Adjunct Instructor; Dr. Pasquale Tolomeo (B.S., '09), DDS at New York University/Bellevue Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Residency; Mr. Damon Urso, P.E. (B.S., '73), Project Manager at Nassau County Department of Public Works.

Also attending the event were two administrators and six local high school students of the St. John's University Science and Technology Entry Program (STEP), and the family members of the high school students. Teaming with the STEP program, St. John's SPS chapter has been conducting a total of eleven physics workshops for the students in the STEP program since fall 2009 and such outreach activities have provided us the opportunities to connect with local high school students. Having some of these students to attend our Sigma Pi Sigma induction ceremony would allow us to enhance this connection and inspire them to pursue STEM careers.

The event began with a physics jeopardy game. After hearing from instructions from Dr. Huizhong Xu, faculty advisor of St. John's University Chapter of Society of Physics Students, six teams: Rocket, Interstellar, Achievers, Dazed and Confused, Gravity, and Team X, were formed by mixing high school students, St. John's students, alumni guests, and faculty in each team. The physics jeopardy has five categories including "Who Said This?", "All About Sigma Pi Sigma", "Dimensional Analysis", "Whose Equation Is It?", and "Nobel Prize Winners in Physics". Some of the jeopardy questions were easy while other questions were hard forcing team members to work together to form the answers, and the competition between teams was intense. The game stirred a lot of joy and laughter in the air of the room, and brought all participants closer. In the end, teams "Gravity", "Interstellar", "Team X" made into the top three places. The game brought a lot of fun to the event and set a very joyful tone for the rest of the induction ceremony.



Teams were formed by mixing high school students, St. John's students, alumni guests, and faculty in each team and were ready to compete in the Physics Jeopardy game.

The induction ceremony was officially opened at 6:30 pm by Dr. Mostafa Sadoqi, chair of the Physics Department at St. John's University, who welcomed physics alumni, high school students, current students, faculty and staff, and family members and friends of alumni and students to the event. In addition to inducting the new members, said Dr. Sadoqi, the goal of the Sigma Pi Sigma induction ceremony is to form a strong bond between students, alumni, and faculty and staff. However, this year's induction ceremony is quite special in that we would like to honor Dr. Robert Finkel, Professor and Chair Emeritus of the St. John's University Physics Department, and his over 40 years of physics career. Dr. Sadoqi spoke highly of the tremendous service Dr. Robert Finkel had provided to the physics community, the St. John's University, and the physics department during his career. He also spoke very emotionally about the guidance Dr. Finkel provided to him over the years!

Following the opening remarks by Dr. Sadoqi, Mr. Justin Perkins-Ollila, the 2014-2015 President of our SPS chapter, presented the mission and history of Sigma Pi Sigma and emphasized the various roles that Sigma Pi Sigma plays in servicing our society. In fact, as

pictures of St. John's University SPS helping high school students from the STEP program were shown on the power point, the administrators and students of the STEP program attending the event nodded their heads and were very appreciative of the service St. John's SPS chapter provided to the STEP program.



Mr. Justin Perkins-Ollila, the 2014-2015 President of our SPS chapter, was presenting the mission and history of Sigma Pi Sigma.

Dr. Huizhong Xu conducted the induction of new members. As the inductees' names were called, each inductee came forward to receive his or her membership certificate and ID card. The new inductees were congratulated by the audience with a big applause for their outstanding achievements. With the induction of nine new members this year, St. John's Sigma Pi sigma Chapter has inducted 56 members in the last six years and a total of 69 members since its establishment in 1973. Dr. Xu congratulated all inductees and conducted the charge to new members, and encouraged them to continue their commitment to honorable scholarship, to assist the development of interest in physics at all possible levels, to provide fellowship as traditional physicists or 'hidden physicists' to his or her professional community, and to offer their

collective wisdom and perspective in the service of the larger society. In particular, he encouraged the new inductees with his personal motto: with physics, you can do anything!

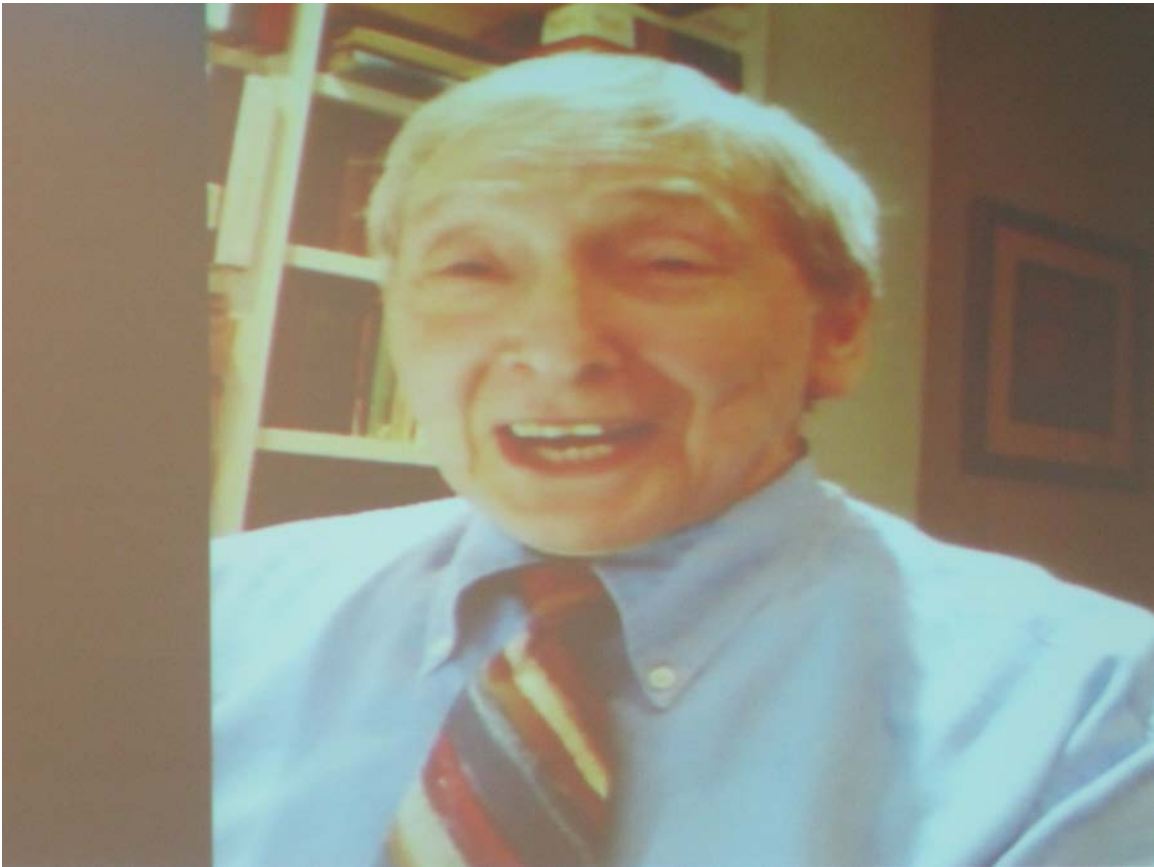


Andre R. Coburn, a physics junior at St. John's University, was inducted to Sigma Pi Sigma.

Following the induction ceremony, all attendees were invited to enjoy a buffet dinner. During the buffet reception, some of the students and the alumni guests held conversations in small groups to get to know each other and exchange thoughts on career options for physics majors. The conversations were very friendly, positive, and stimulating. During the buffet reception, we were able to connect with Dr. Finkel via Skype. Many alumni, faculty and staff were very excited to see Dr. Finkel, after five years of his retirement!

Around 7:20 pm, Dr. Huizhong Xu asked the audience to be quiet, and welcomed Dr. Finkel to share a few words of wisdom with the students. Dr. Finkel greeted all attendees, was very happy to see a lot of old faces, and congratulated the new inductees! He encouraged our students to maintain excellent scholarship, service to the community, and fellowship. He used a quote in the 1950 motion picture "Harvey" to illustrate the importance of fellowship: "Well, for years I was smart. I recommend pleasant. You may quote me." At the end, Dr. Finkel wished

everyone the best: “May your life be more wonderful than you imagined. Thank you!” And the audience could not wait to give a big applause to Dr. Finkel’s inspirational words of wisdom!



Dr. Robert W. Finkel, Professor and Chair Emeritus of the St. John’s University Physics Department, was sharing his words of wisdom at the Induction Ceremony.

Following Dr. Finkel’s inspiring remarks, Dr. Xu introduced Dr. Jeffrey Fagen, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences of St. John’s University, to say a few words to the students. Dr. Fagen started by congratulating all new inductees and their family members for their honor and achievements. Dr. Fagen used his own example of being inducted to the National Honor Society of Psychology to encourage our students to be proud of their achievements and continue excellent scholarship! At the end of his speech, Dr. Fagen encouraged our students to learn from the stories of our alumni speakers about how St. John’s education has helped their careers long after they graduated, and congratulated all inductees again for their achievements!



Dr. Jeffrey Fagen, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences of St. John's University, was sharing his words of wisdom at the Induction Ceremony.

Following the remarks by Dr. Fagen, our alumni guests were introduced by Dr. Xu to share their education and career experiences with our students.

The event's first alumni speaker was Ms. Emily Lavelle. Emily received her B.S. in Physics and J.D. from St. John's University in 2003 and 2006 respectively. She is currently an attorney at The Law Offices of Dominick W. Lavelle. Emily started her talk by congratulating all inductees and in particular the seniors who are graduating this year! She recalled her experience of taking Dr. Finkel's University Physics class and how this experience has turned her into a physics major. She talked about how Dr. Finkel's thorough knowledge, humor, and passion had changed her perception of physics. Emily also recalled that Dr. Finkel was always behind students one hundred percent, whether it is about helping students with their study, giving students advice, or writing letters of recommendation. She also shared with students how the training in reasoning and analytical skills as a physics major went a long way to help her succeed in her legal career. She was very grateful to our physics professors for giving her a challenging

yet rewarding St. John's experience! At the end of her talk, Emily congratulated all inductees again and asked them to feel free to contact her if they have any questions.



Ms. Emily Lavelle (B.S., '03) was sharing her education and career development experience with students.

Following Ms. Lavelle's vivid recall of her education experience at St. John's, a number of other alumni spoke about their study at St. John's and the influence that Dr. Finkel's remarkable character, humor, and dedication had on them. The speakers included: Mr. Andrew Parkes, Building Manager and Physics Adjunct Instructor; Mr. John Gienau, teacher at the Queens School of Inquiry; Mr. Kingsley Joseph, Medical Physics student at Hofstra University; Mr. William Lamberti, Researcher/Physicist at Exxon Mobil; Mr. Bill Lauto, Environmental Scientist, Energy & Sustainability Consultant and President of his own consulting firm, Going True Green; Mr. Simon Odie, Electrical Design Engineer/Supervisor, Con Edison; Dr. Pasquale Tolomeo, DDS at New York University/Bellevue Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Residency; and Mr. Damon Urso, P.E., Project Manager at Nassau County Department of Public Works. They recalled their experience of study at St. John's University, their interaction with Dr. Finkel, and the influence Dr. Finkel and the overall St. John's experience had on their careers. Many of them

talked about the impact their undergraduate math and physics preparation at St. John's had on their professional careers. They all expressed their gratitude to the overall St. John's experience and the fellowship between students, alumni, and faculty of the physics department, and encouraged current students to keep this bond strong!



Mr. Kingsley Joseph (B.S., '10) was speaking about the field of Medical Physics and his graduate study experience.



Mr. William Lamberti (B.S., '85) was sharing his physics study and career development experience with students.

During these talks, students asked some of the speakers a lot of questions about the job specifics of certain careers, and the preparation and transitions to these careers. At the end of each presentation, Dr. Xu presented the alumnus guest speaker a Certificate of Appreciation and a gift to thank them for taking time out of their busy schedule to come to St. John's and to inspire our physics students.

Dr. Xu concluded the ceremony by encouraging all students to get the most out of their education and keep open-minded regarding what they can do with a physics degree! He also thanked everyone who came to attend the induction ceremony and acknowledged the generous support from the SPS National Office and St. John's University that made the event possible and a great success!

The entire event was recorded and can be viewed at the following link:

<https://stj-events.webex.com/stj-events/lsr.php?RCID=e0b93c0d5693f47995ecb2a44f2d322d>

Expenses:

Food, Beverage, and Utensils: \$1017.00

Certificates and Gifts for Alumni: \$125.24

Prizes for the Physics Jeopardy: \$236.61

Total: \$1378.85



Students and family members pose for a nice photo!



Students and alumni were chatting!



Students and alumni pose for a nice photo!



Students, alumni, and parents of high school students were chatting!



High school students and family members pose for a nice photo!



Students and alumni pose for a nice photo!



Happy to be a new inductee of Sigma Pi Sigma!



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Mr. Andrew Parkes (B.S., '04) was sharing his education and career development experience with students.



Mr. John Gienau (B.S., '09) was sharing his education and career development experience with students.



Mr. Bill Lauto was sharing his education and career development experience with students.



Mr. Simon Odie (B.S., '08) was sharing his education and career development experience with students.



Dr. Pasquale Tolomeo Odie (B.S., '09) was sharing his education and career development experience with students.



Mr. Damon Urso (B.S., '73) was sharing his education and career development experience with students, and talked about the huge amount of engineering knowledge involved in the project he was currently working on at Nassau County Department of Public Works.



Students and family members pose for a nice photo!



St. John's Physics Students pose for a nice photo!



A nice photo of the high school student attendees and their family members!



A nice photo of our alumni attendees of the event!



A group photo of the 2015 inductees (from left to right): Christopher M. Paider, Shadab Hassan, Justin Perkins-Ollila, Aaron J. Campbell, Thomas L. Lamson, Andre R. Coburn, and Levine T. Ching. Inductees Mohamed Dillon and Thomas G. Hackimer were absent from the photo.



A group photo of the 2014-2015 St. John's University Chapter of SPS e-board members (from left to right): Secretary, Shadab Hassan; Treasurer, Thomas Campbell; Vice President, Orlando Lopez; President, Justin Perkins-Ollila. Public Relations Officer Shafat Choudhury was absent from the photo.