A University Exemplary Department 1999, 2003

Awards Ceremony
April 21, 2006

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John Simonetti

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Royce Zia

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Virginia Tech Physics Department
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Jamie Dunn Award
Juliette M. Mammei - Johnstown, Pennsylvania
Russell R. Mammei - El Paso, Texas

This award was established in 1982 in the memory of Jamie Dunn by the Dunn family. Jamie was a graduate student in the physics department doctoral program. He was in the final stages of the research of a very difficult experiment on electron energy loss spectroscopy. A tragic accident claimed his life in 1982. In recognition of his work, he was awarded the Ph.D. posthumously. The award is given to a physics graduate student or students who demonstrate some of Jamie’s qualities: goodwill, enthusiasm for physics, determination to overcome adversity, and a great love for life.

Juliette Mammei was born in Johnstown, Pennsylvania and was a student at Juniata College. Russell was born in El Paso, Texas and attended the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). He met Juliette at a nuclear physics laboratory, Jefferson Lab, in Newport News, Virginia, where they were both summer interns. In order to be closer to Russell, Juliette transferred to UTEP, where she received her bachelor’s degree in physics, and Russell received a Bachelor’s degree in physics and mathematics. (They got married before they graduated!) Russell and Juliette have attended numerous collaboration meetings for their respective experiments and were able to attend several conferences for nuclear and particle physics. In the summer of 2003, they attended the Gordon Conference, held at Colby College, Maine. Both also attended the American Physical Society Division of Nuclear Physics joint meeting with the Japanese Physical Society Division of Nuclear Physics in Maui, Hawaii in the fall of 2005. Both Juliette and Russell consider themselves very fortunate to have been awarded National Science Foundation Graduate Research fellowships and the Virginia Tech Cunningham Awards when they joined Virginia Tech.

Ray F. Tipsword Graduate Scholarship
Kanokwan Nontapot-Anncharaun, Thailand

Following his retirement in 1992 from a career in both general and condensed matter physics, friends and family members of Professor Ray F. Tipsword established a scholarship in his name. The Tipsword Graduate Scholarship, first awarded in 1995, is awarded to a promising graduate student in the area of condensed matter physics, statistical mechanics, and/or optics.

The Mammei’s experiments are on opposite ends of the country. Juliette still works at the Jefferson Lab, where she now participates in Qweak, an experiment which will measure the weak charge of the proton through parity-violating elastic electron-proton scattering. She recently had a publication, Low-Q scaling, duality, and the EMC effect, Phys. Rev. C 73, 035205 (2006), which was based on work she performed at the Jefferson Lab as an undergraduate. In addition, Juliette served as Graduate Student Assembly representative from the physics department and was the GSA representative to the Graduate Curriculum Committee for a semester.

Russell is working on the UCN-A experiment at Los Alamos National Lab, which will measure the parity-violating asymmetry in polarized neutron beta decay. He is an active member of the Virginia Tech Men’s Tennis club. He and Juliette have both been inducted in the Physics Honor Society, Sigma Pi Sigma, and have participated in a student-led teaching workshop for physics here in the department. Both have been active in helping with the New Orleans relief work for families that have relocated here and fundraising for Katrina hurricane relief. They live in Fairlawn, Virginia with their two golden retrievers, Zeus and Hera, and their female cat, George.
Kanokwan Nontapot completed her Bachelor’s degree in physics from Mahidol University (Bangkok, Thailand) in 2001, and graduated with her Master’s degree from Chulalongkorn University (Bangkok, Thailand) in July 2003. She was awarded a scholarship to study in the United States. Kanokwan joined our physics doctoral program in the fall of 2003. Her special interest is in experimental condensed matter. Professor Giti Khodaparast became her Ph.D. advisor in the summer of 2004. Since then, she has dedicated her energies to her research and been working diligently on Time Resolved Studies of Magnetic and Nonmagnetic Narrow Gap Semiconductors. She performed some research with narrow gap semiconductors at the National High Magnetic Field Laboratory in Tallahassee, Florida in fall 2004, attended the 12th International Conference on Narrow Gap Semiconductors in July 2005 in Toulouse, France, and at the beginning of December of that year, successfully completed her Ph.D. candidacy. Recently, she gave a presentation at the APS March Meeting in 2006, Baltimore, Maryland. Her research is progressing very nicely. Kanokwan is a civic-minded, energetic, and talented lady. Apart from her busy research schedule, she has volunteered her time assisting incoming international students at the Annual Furniture Giveaway in fall 2004. She also performed a Thai classical dance at the International Talent show in the spring of 2004, and in 2004 joined the Thai Student Association to organize and help with the International Street Fair.

William E. Hassinger Graduate Fellowship
Aliya Gifford- Bedford, Virginia

Established this spring, the physics department is honored to have the William E. Hassinger Graduate Fellowship as the latest endowment. A physics graduate in the Class of 1950, Bill Hassinger has been an enthusiastic supporter of our department. This Fellowship is created to encourage and support students coming from the surrounding communities, who are pursuing graduate degrees in physics.

Aliya Gifford attended Randolph-Macon Woman’s College in Lynchburg, Virginia, where she earned a Bachelor’s degree in physics. She joined the Applied and Industrial Master’s program at Virginia Tech in the fall of 2004. Aliya presented papers at the MARCUS conference in October 2003, and AAPT conference in January 2004 that dealt with creating better physics curricula for high school students. She is pursuing her Master degree under the tutelage of Professor Giti Khodaparast. Aliya is engaged in a joint research project with Virginia Tech’s biology and physics departments. The research being done investigates targeted transfection and analysis of living cells by femtosecond lasers. This process uses high energy pulsed lasers to penetrate living cells without harming the cell. Aliya anticipates to complete her degree by the spring of 2007.

C.H. Wan Scholarship
David Adams- Huntsville, Alabama
JiaJia Dong- Shanghai, China
David Erickson- Hampton, Virginia
Brian Skinner- St. Anthony, Idaho

Had physics been a topic available to Chinese girls in the early 1900s, C.H. Wan would have become a physicist. Instead, she channeled her creative talents into literature and poetry, as well as a career in teaching. As a teacher, she provided much inspiration and encouragement to many youngsters who aspired to be physicists. Established in 1991, the C.H. Wan Scholarship is awarded to rising seniors and/or graduate students nearing completion of a Ph.D. dissertation, who demonstrate both academic excellence in physics and research accomplishments in stochastic processes.
David Adams was born on October 21, 1983 in Washington D.C. He lived there until 1990, when his family moved to Alexandria, Virginia. In his sophomore year of high school, he moved to Huntsville, Alabama, where his father began working at Marshall Space Flight Center. He graduated from Grissom High School in 2002. David plans to graduate from Virginia Tech with degrees in physics and computer science. Following graduation, he hopes to obtain a Ph.D. in physics and become a professor. Outside of class, he likes to work on research. Over the last two years, he has completed one research project, and started a second one, on models of non-equilibrium statistical mechanics with Drs. Beate Schmittmann and Royce Zia. In addition, he has conducted microdosimetry research with his father, worked on a project in the Computer Science department, as well as a personal one on pattern database heuristics.

JiaJia Dong joined the department in the fall of 2003 with a Bachelor’s degree from Shanghai Jiao Tong University. She delved into the program and decided to pursue her Ph.D. in the area of theoretical condensed matter under the guidance of Drs. Beate Schmittmann and Royce Zia. She successfully completed her Ph.D. candidacy exam in the fall of 2005 and will earn her master’s degree this spring. A year ago, JiaJia was recognized with the Jamie Dunn Award for her enthusiasm for physics and participation and organization in student activities such as volunteering at the Cranwell International Student Center and working on the Spring Festival Celebration Party for 2004 with the Association of Chinese Scholars and Students. Since then, she has presented papers at the 94th Statistical Mechanics meeting and the annual American Physics Society meeting. In the fall of 2005 she was awarded a Graduate Fellowship in the EIGER project - an NSF funded IGERT program. She expects to have a paper - Towards a Model for Protein Production Rates- published in the Journal of Statistical Physics in the near future, and has another manuscript in preparation. After the Ph.D., she plans a research career in biophysics.

David Erickson is a senior physics and mathematics dual major from Hampton, Virginia. With a perfect QCA, he has received numerous awards and scholarships, including the prestigious national Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship. Apart from course work, he has participated in many undergraduate research projects - at VT, UCLA, and the Jefferson Lab (Newport News, VA). He is an active member of the Society of Physics Students and Sigma Pi Sigma. His non-academic hobbies include snowboarding and watching films. David will begin Ph.D. studies in physics this fall. After obtaining his Ph.D. he plans to pursue a research career, most likely in academia.

Brian Skinner is preparing for his super senior year as a physics and mechanical engineering major, with minors in mathematics and Spanish. For the past few years, Brian has been working with Dr. Beate Schmittmann and Royce Zia doing condensed matter simulations and with Dr. Bruce Vogelaar in the particle physics lab. He is very grateful to both of them for the cool opportunities and exciting ideas to which they have exposed him. These research projects also contributed to him being the only Virginia Tech student this year to win the prestigious Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship. Brian plans to enter graduate school in physics next fall and hopes to become a teacher and a researcher on the university level. Brian comes from a large, close-knit family, to which he accredits his love of science and most of his academic success. In his spare time, he enjoys reading, playing the guitar, and playing basketball.
Alice Estes Martin Scholarship
Ashley Tabb - Richmond, Virginia

This scholarship provides incentive and support to a physics major of high academic achievement who is committed to teaching physics in secondary school. Professor Dale Long initiated this endowed scholarship in 1991 and named it in honor of Alice Estes Martin, an inspirational former teacher in Louisa County High School (Virginia). Family members and other students of Mrs. Martin, as well as friends of the Physics Department, have also contributed to this endowment.

Ashley Tabb, a first year student from Richmond, Virginia, is currently working toward a major in physics and a minor in chemistry. She is a member of the Chi Omega sorority and the National Society of Collegiate Scholars. She hopes to become a high school physics teacher.

Col. Nelson Carey Brown Memorial Scholarship
Julian McMorrow - Chantilly, Virginia

This scholarship is endowed by Dr. Nancy Brown in memory of her late brother, Col. Nelson Carey Brown, Virginia Tech Class of 1965. Col. Brown felt that both his education in physics and the leadership skills he learned in the Corp of Cadets were critical to his professional success. The scholarship is awarded to an entering freshman majoring in physics who demonstrates academic ability and financial need. The award can be retained for up to four years as long as the student maintains a GPA of 3.0 or higher and remains a physics major.

Julian McMorrow was born in Toronto, Canada to Dale and Christina McMorrow. He was raised and schooled in Northern Virginia where he graduated from Chantilly High School. Julian is a member of the Society of Physics Students and is a member of the men’s water polo team. He also works as a research aide for Dr. Hans Robinson. In the future, he hopes to pursue a Ph.D. in physics and a career in research.

Frank Leigh Robeson Scholarship
Lake Singh - Burke, Virginia
Stefan Tatka - Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Emily Wade - Bethesda, Maryland

Early leadership in the development of the Virginia Tech Physics Department was due to the work of one man - Dr. Frank Robeson, after whom the physics building is now named. Robeson was the first doctorate level physicist at VPI and was the author of a widely adopted textbook in the 1940s. In 1995, the Robeson family endowed a scholarship in his honor and memory. The scholarship goes to a student who has demonstrated academic achievement, personal integrity, extracurricular leadership, community service, and appreciation of physics.
Stefan Taka was born and raised in Pennsylvania, just outside of Pittsburgh. Virginia Tech is the second college he has attended, having transferred from a small, private school in his home state. There, he was a member of the school’s football and tennis teams. Today, he is no longer involved in collegiate sports, finding that Virginia Tech has more variety in the way of extracurricular activities than to which he is accustomed. Although finding his niche in that respect has been a bit overwhelming, these days Stefan spends his time playing guitar and participating in recreational sports. As to his future plans, he is very interested in the emerging field of nanotechnology and would like to learn more about its role in the world to come.

Emily Wade is from Bethesda, Maryland, and realized that physics was her passion in her senior year of high school. Upon entering Virginia Tech, she developed an apprentice-like relationship with Professor Giti Khodaparast and spent the following summer learning the ropes in Giti’s ultra-fast laser lab. Emily is a very enthusiastic, animated, and excitable student who loves physics classes and research. Aside from learning physics, Emily spends her free time working out at War Memorial gym. The energy boost she gets from weight training and running helps her stay focused on her school work. Emily adores animals and has a cat and dog back home in Bethesda. Next year, she will bring her cat to school with her for some companionship in her single apartment. If she were to be anything besides a physics professor or researcher, she would want to be a veterinarian.

Lake Singh is an aspiring freshman from Burke, Virginia. When not doing homework or studying for his own tests, he can generally be found helping other people on his hall with various subjects. He is an Eagle Scout and a member of the University Honors program. Lake is a double major in physics and aerospace engineering, and is currently a junior member in an aerospace senior design team. Lake enjoys scientific endeavors and intends to work for the government in the research and development of spacecraft technologies, specifically propulsion.

Hugh D. Ussery Scholarship
Justin Bangerter- Forest, Virginia
Christopher Knorowski- Newport News, Virginia
Kristen Pervarski- Roanoke, Virginia
Brent Pickering- Prince Frederick, Maryland
Lado Tonia- Fairfax, Virginia
Vipin Vijayan- Kerala, India

When the family of the late Hugh D. Ussery endowed a scholarship in his name in 1984, they established the first such award for the Virginia Tech Physics Department. Professor Ussery joined the faculty in 1934 and remained at VPI for nearly 40 years. During his time here, he developed a laboratory in optical spectroscopic analysis of which he was very proud. The Ussery Scholarships are awarded each year to one or more rising juniors who have been deemed to show great promise for a career in physics.

Justin Bangerter was born in Provo, Utah, but has been living in Forest, Virginia for eight or nine years. He currently lives on campus and is involved in the Virginia Tech Tae Kwon Do club. He still volunteers during breaks at Crisis Line of Central Virginia. He is not certain of his ultimate career goal, but is interested in working for the Department of Energy on projects relating to helping with the energy crisis. Justin is also interested in many fields of nanotechnology. He also likes the idea of working for a university. He worked as a tutor in high school and has always enjoyed sharing and explaining what he knows about science and mathematics to whomever seems interested.

Chris Knorowski is from Newport News, Virginia, and went to Menchville High School. His extracurricular activities include hiking, backpacking, camping, Frisbee, and pool. He also plays soccer on the Virginia Tech club soccer team. His goal for the future is to enter graduate school to continue studying physics.
Kristen Pevarski is from Cave Spring High School in Roanoke, Virginia. Outside of school, she spends most of her time working with kids with cerebral palsy. At Virginia Tech, she is working towards a degree in physics and biological systems engineering so she can design wheelchairs for the physically disabled.

Brent Pickering comes from Prince Frederick, Maryland. Having always lived near the water, his favorite hobby is fishing of all types (deep sea, in the bay, etc). He currently has no ultimate career goals, but hopes to get a graduate degree in some type of physics.

Lado Tonia was born in Prescott, Arizona and moved to Fairfax, Virginia where he has been living for the majority of his life. In 2005, he graduated from Fairfax High School where he played soccer for three years and swam for four years. Through his senior year of high school, he worked in the Electrical and Computer Engineering department at George Mason University, doing mostly IT work. He dual enrolled in classes there as well. In the future, he hopes to incorporate his knowledge of computers with research in the field of optics.

Vipin Vijayan was born in Kerala, India. He moved to Singapore when he was ten years old, and to Virginia when he was fourteen. He has moved around a lot and has never really had a permanent home, even in Kerala. He likes to think that he likes traveling to new places. During his free time, he likes to read books, ride his bicycle, play video games, or play sports. He likes to read a lot, and has a modest collection of books at home, mostly novels. His career goals are not set in stone. He thinks he would like to do something related to physics or engineering.

Robert C. Coleman Richardson Scholarship
Daniel Baker- Durham, North Carolina
Anna Belak – Springfield, Virginia
Timothy Donahue- Point Pleasant Boro, New Jersey
James Dowd- Yorktown, Virginia
Kevin Finelli - Yorktown, Virginia
Jonathan Hughes- Pocatello, Idaho
Brendon Loiselle- Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Elizabeth Lowry- Virginia Beach, Virginia
Sean Settle- Jeffersonson, Virginia
Byron Wiedeman- Vienna, Virginia

Through a generous gift by an anonymous donor, a scholarship has been established in honor of Dr. Robert C. Richardson, a professor of physics at Cornell University. Richardson, who earned his Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in physics at Virginia Tech, was the co-recipient of the 1996 Nobel Prize for physics. This scholarship is awarded to an undergraduate physics major deemed especially deserving. This scholarship rewards academic talent, responsibility, and industry.

Daniel Baker was born in Durham, North Carolina. Although his career goals are not solid, he is currently looking into doing graduate work in physics.

Anna Belak was born in Riga, Latvia, and moved to the United States when she was ten years old. Her family now lives in Northern Virginia. Anna is studying physics at Virginia Tech because someday she would like to become a research scientist and discover many cool and useful things or, more ambitiously, become a big boss in charge of a crew of other research scientists who will discover aforementioned things. Anna has taken some effective steps towards this goal by participating in undergraduate research at Virginia Tech.
Anna is now working for Tech as well as REU programs at other universities around the country. After graduating from college, she intends to go on to graduate school and earn an Master’s and/or Ph.D. in physics or engineering. When she is not working on physics (and this is rare), Anna enjoys reading, listening to music, spending too much time on the computer, and practicing Tae Kwon Do, in which she currently holds a high brown belt.

Whether it was taking apart his first Nintendo to see how it worked, or building a working hovercraft for his middle school science fair, Tim Donahue has always had a desire for knowledge and the motivation to get it. This passion is what brought him to Virginia Tech, where he is currently an undergraduate physics major. Some of his proud accomplishments include making the dean’s list his first semester of college, graduating high school as the president of its National Honor Society, and, of course, becoming a Hokie. Everything he has earned in his life he has accredited to his parents, who have always supported him and have been there for him, and also to his grandfather, Edward Brock, who taught Tim how to dream and follow his heart.

James Dowd is from Yorktown, Virginia. He is currently a member of the Society of Physics Students. His future goals include receiving a Master’s degree.

Kevin Finelli was born in Newport News, Virginia, and grew up in Yorktown. He is a double major in mathematics and physics, and plans to add a minor in Latin. Kevin is a member of the Virginia Tech Tae Kwon Do club and enjoys playing the bass guitar in his free time. His career goals are to earn a Ph.D. in physics from Virginia Tech and become a university professor.

Jonathan Hughes is from Pocatello, Idaho, and came to Virginia Tech to fulfill a family tradition. He is a member of the Undergraduate Honors program and is double majoring in physics and biology with an option in biotechnology. His future plans include earning a Ph.D. in biological physics and going into research related to genetics and molecular biology. He is currently assisting Dr. Bruce Vogelaar with research on the Borexino Solar Neutrino project.

Brendon Loiselle was born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He is a member of the Society of Physics Students and the University Honors program. He also participates in intramural football and basketball, and is a member of the Sigma Chi fraternity. After graduation, he hopes to go on to medical school to study to be a radiologist. He would like to start his own practice or perhaps a company in the biophysics field.

Elizabeth Lowry is from Virginia Beach, Virginia, and is currently working on a double major in physics and computer science. She likes surfing the Web, drawing, and watching Mythbusters on the Discovery Channel.

Sean Owen Settle resides in Jeffersonton, VA with his parents, Roger and Sylvia Settle. Sean is a senior triple majoring in physics, mathematics, and chemistry. He plans to graduate in the spring or fall of 2007 and then pursue a Ph.D. in applied or condensed matter physics. This summer, Sean will be traveling to the Chulabhorn Research Institute in Bangkok, Thailand for an NSF REU through UCSC. Some of his favorite hobbies include learning foreign languages, such as Mandarin Chinese, and watching foreign films.
A boy born in Hamburg, Germany, and a boy that has lived overseas most of his life, Byron Wiedeman is now a young man from Vienna, Virginia. He has had aspirations to become a physicist since very early in his high school career at James Madison High School, and being here at Virginia Tech studying physics has done nothing but intensify his aspirations that physics will be an integral part of his life. Byron has always enjoyed acting, and continues to perform every time he has an opportunity to do so. Byron’s plans for the future are to start his own physics research company. After a long and prosperous career with research, he hopes to retire and teach high school physics, perhaps inspiring young men and women like himself to dive into the wonderful world of physics.

Robert P. Hamilton Prize
Richard Bailey - Burke, Virginia

The Hamilton Prize is named in honor of Dr. Robert Preston Hamilton, who received his Bachelor’s degree from Virginia Tech in 1975. Led by Tech professor Dr. David Jenkins, several generous donors, including Hamilton’s classmates, professors, and especially his family, established the Robert P. Hamilton Prize in 1991, two years after his untimely death from cancer. As a prolific researcher in the field of experimental elementary particle physics, Hamilton established a notable record in the 14 years he lived after receiving his Ph.D. from Berkeley. The prize is awarded to a student who has exhibited both career promise and the very high scholastic standards for which Hamilton was known.

Richard Bailey has lived in Burke, Virginia all of his life. He enjoys traveling, having been to England (twice), France, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden. His extracurricular activities include weightlifting and exercise. He is also into martial arts, having earned his brown belt in Tae Kwon Do from the Black Belt Academy. Richard’s career goals include finishing his undergraduate degree in physics, then moving onto graduate studies and earning at least a Master’s degree. He ultimately plans to do commercial research and apply what he has learned to industry.

Webster & Sara Schoene Richardson Memorial Scholarship
Elizabeth Bonnell - Germantown, Maryland
Laura "Devon" Triplett - McLean, Virginia

Both Web and Sara Richardson taught in the Virginia Tech Physics Department for several decades. In addition to their work with the introductory courses, where they were known for their exacting standards, Sara developed a course called “household physics”, while Web developed an x-ray laboratory where he constructed extensive apparatus of which he was justly proud and which was used by many of the first graduate students in physics at Virginia Tech. The scholarship was established in 1998 by family members.

Elizabeth Bonnell was born in Washington D.C. and raised in Germantown, Maryland with her twin sister Megan. She is a junior double major in physics and mathematics. She is active in her church, Church of the Holy Spirit—The River. She works for Dr. Bruce Vogelaar on a project called UCN (Ultra Cold Neutrons), an opportunity which is proving to be very valuable and enjoyable. Her future plans are to go to graduate school. She would like to go to Caltech or Rice University but is planning to be accessible to as many schools as possible so that she can be flexible in location to accommodate her future family plans. She would like to work for the government doing pure research once she has her Ph.D. in physics. Her future plans also include raising a family and owning a home somewhere warm. She is very grateful for the opportunity this scholarship is allowing her and thanks the department very much for this recognition and praise.
Laura “Devon” Triplett, a junior physics major from McLean, Virginia, is also completing a mathematics minor and an equine science minor. She does research for Dr. Hans Robinson and has worked for Dr. Bruce Vogelaar in the past. Devon is the Public Relations Officer for the Society of Physics Students and is the Assistant Coordinator for Ladies of Robeson. Outside of the classroom, she enjoys horseback riding, hanging out with friends, and reading. After graduating in 2007, Devon hopes to attend graduate school in order to obtain a Ph.D. in applied physics.

Daniel C. & Delia F. Grant Scholarship

Samir “Sam” Abboud- Deale Maryland
David Adams- Huntsville, Alabama
Geoffrey “Geoff” Adams- Alexandria, Virginia
Christopher “Ryan” Luck- Greer, South Carolina
Linh Pham- Annandale, Virginia
Brian Skinner- St. Anthony, Idaho
Brett Spencer- Springfield, Virginia
Eric Ward- Lovettsville, Virginia

In 1990, two new and substantial scholarships were endowed in the names of Daniel C. and Delia F. Grant, the parents of Dr. Frederick C. Grant, a former Virginia Tech doctoral student. These coveted scholarships are designated for entering National Merit Scholars. The recipients may retain the scholarships if they meet high academic standards.

Born into a cruel and unforgiving world, Samir “Sam” Abboud always strived to make the best of a less than desirable situation. Whisked away from the luxuries of a home in America at the tender age of three months, Sam grew up in the harsh desert environment of Saudi Arabia. While he was there, he learned of his passion for physics. It seemed that amid the various explosions of violence, one of the few ways to escape the chaos was through the orderly beauty of physical laws. Despite these distractions, or perhaps because of them, Sam became more and more engulfed by this infatuation. And so, here we are. Sam plans to keep up with physics as a hobby, but will eschew graduate school for application to a medical program.

A native resident of Alexandria, Virginia, Geoffrey “Geoff” Adams realized a semester into his college education that he missed solving physics problems, and so decided to add the major. After a short time of dual-majoring in physics and biology, he discovered a wide variety of disciplines that unite his two interests, including animal mechanics, neurology, ecology, and exotic sensory systems such as magnetic field sensing. He also discovered the joy of introducing himself as a physicist when amongst biologists, and as a biologist amongst physicists. Geoff is currently a member of the Hillcrest Honors Community and of Sigma Pi Sigma. He hopes to continue to pursue his interests in physics and biology as a professional researcher, studying problems at the intersection of the two fields.

Christopher “Ryan” Luck from Greer, South Carolina is a triple major in physics, mathematics, and economics. He has performed semiconductor research at Clemson, Virginia Tech, and Cornell, in addition to spending a summer in Cairo, Egypt, traipsing around the pyramids and studying Arabic. When he graduates in May 2007, he will continue on to a Ph.D. program -- probably in semiconductor physics, although he has not ruled anything out at this point.

Linh Pham is a junior physics and computer engineering major from Annandale, Virginia. Her research interests lie in the field of nanotechnology; however, she is not yet sure on which particular area she would like to focus for her research in graduate school. She plans to attend an NSF-sponsored Research Experience for Undergraduates program this summer to help her decide which area most interests her. Her career aspiration is to be involved in the research and development of ever smaller electronic devices which will replace present electronics technology. Linh's other hobbies include swing dancing, chorale singing, and going to the theater multiple times for the same movie.

Brett Spencer is currently a junior physics major with a minor in mathematics. When he is not in school, he lives in Springfield, Virginia with his family. He enjoys participating in Kendo and is an active cast member in the Rocky Horror Fan Club. After finishing his Ph.D. in optics, he hopes to pursue a career in optical engineering.
Eric Ward comes from Lovettsville, Virginia, a small town in Northern Virginia. Originally selecting physics with the intent of switching to engineering, he had tentatively declared computer science and mathematics as secondary majors before resting with philosophy. When not consumed with physics homework or philosophy papers (a seldom occurrence), Eric enjoys reading, spending time with his girlfriend Michelle, or the innocuous partying with friends. True to the spirit of liberal arts, Eric has no definite career goals but is considering graduate school in applied physics.

Lubna R. Ijaz Scholarship
David Erickson – Hampton, Virginia
Mark Washenberger – Salem, Virginia

Following her receipt of a prize for her work in physics, Dr. Lubna Ijaz donated the prize toward the establishment of a scholarship. She and her late husband, Professor Mujaddid Ijaz of the Virginia Tech Physics Department, were associated with the university for a number of years and were well known in southwest Virginia. The Lubna R. Ijaz Scholarship was first awarded in 1996 and goes to a student who has shown great commitment to the science of physics and has rendered significant service to the department and the cause of physics education.

David Erickson (See “C.H. Wan Scholarship”)

Mark Washenberger (See “Lubna R. Ijaz Scholarship”)

A native of Salem, Virginia, Mark Washenberger grew up in a home where mathematics was the first and only language. While emotionally crippling him, this environment did prepare him well for a college career where he majors in physics, mathematics, and computer science. When he is not slaving over hot, dusty computers, he enjoys spending time with his hot, dusty girlfriend(s) and/or hiking. Career-wise, Mark is up for “you know, whatever”, although he has been accepted to graduate school in computer science at Virginia Tech and has received a job offer with a company in the Corporate Research Center.

H.Y. Loh Award
David Erickson – Hampton, Virginia
Mark Washenberger – Salem, Virginia

The H.Y. Loh Award, a cash prize awarded upon graduation, became the very first award or scholarship dedicated to our physics majors. As a token of the high esteem in which Professor Loh was regarded by his colleagues, Dr. Ray Tipsword approached colleagues to create an endowed award which was first given in 1977. Loh retired in 1976, and at the time was the only member of the Virginia Tech Physics Department to have been awarded the W.E. Wine Award for Excellence in Teaching. The H.Y. Loh Award is made each spring to the graduating physics major who best exemplifies Dr. Loh’s very high academic and personal
Leah Shaw was born in central Virginia and still considers Virginia to be home. Interested in biological systems from an early age, she earned her Associate’s degree in biology at Piedmont Virginia Community College. Leah transferred to Virginia Tech and obtained a Bachelor’s degree in physics and mathematics in 1998. Reluctant to leave Tech, she stayed an additional year to complete a Master’s degree in mathematics. She wrote a Master’s thesis on non-equilibrium systems, based on research carried out with Drs. Beate Schmittmann and Royce Zia.

Leah’s graduate work was done at Cornell University under an NSF fellowship and other fellowships. Her graduate research was on models for protein synthesis in cells, with a goal of better explaining gene expression rates. She completed her Ph.D. in physics in 2004.

Leah is now a National Research Council postdoctoral fellow at the Naval Research Laboratory in Washington, DC. She studies nonlinear dynamical systems, including models for epidemics and coupled laser systems. Leah lives in Alexandria, Virginia, with her husband and her three cats (Pixel, Lepton, and Tiger).