



COLLEGE OF SCIENCE
PHYSICS
VIRGINIA TECH™

Department of Physics

A University Exemplary Department 1999, 2003, 2016



Awards Ceremony 2021



Order of Presentation



Opening Remarks	<i>Prof. Mark Pitt</i>
Clayton D. Williams Graduate Fellowship	<i>Prof. Thomas O'Donnell</i>
William E. Hassinger Graduate Fellowship	<i>Prof. Thomas O'Donnell</i>
James A. Jacobs Memorial Scholarship	<i>Prof. Satoru Emori</i>
Lubna R. Ijaz Scholarship	<i>Prof. Satoru Emori</i>
James R. Dunn Award	<i>Prof. Satoru Emori</i>
Ray F. Tipsword Graduate Fellowship	<i>Prof. Jean Heremans</i>
Wan-Zia Scholarship	<i>Prof. Jean Heremans</i>
Award for Graduate Teaching Excellence	<i>Prof. John Simonetti</i>
Hugh D. Ussery Scholarship	<i>Prof. John Simonetti</i>
Bowden Essay Award	<i>Prof. Michel Pleimling</i>
Daniel C. and Delia F. Grant Scholarship	<i>Prof. Shunsaku Horiuchi</i>
Frank Leigh Robeson Scholarship	<i>Prof. Lara Anderson</i>
Ladies of Robeson Award	<i>Prof. Giti Khodaparast</i>
Robert Coleman Richardson Scholarship	<i>Prof. Shengfeng Cheng</i>
Robert Preston Hamilton Prize	<i>Prof. Uwe Tauber</i>
Webster and Sara Schoene Richardson Memorial Scholarship	<i>Prof. Uwe Tauber</i>
H.Y. Loh Award	<i>Prof. Mark Pitt</i>
Closing Remarks	<i>Prof. Mark Pitt</i>

The Awards and Their Recipients

Clayton D. Williams Graduate Fellowship in Theoretical Physics

This award was established in 2008 by Dr. Klaus Wiemer and his wife, Stella Wiemer. The late Dr. Wiemer was a proud alumnus of the College of Science, having received his Ph.D. in physics in 1969. The couple created this award in honor of Associate Professor Emeritus of Physics, Dr. Clayton D. Williams, who taught full-time at Virginia Tech from 1961 to 1996 and served as research advisor to many graduate students, including the late Dr. Wiemer. Recipients shall be, at the time of receipt of the fellowship funds, graduate students within the Department of Physics, demonstrating academic excellence and good progress towards a Ph.D. in theoretical physics.

2021 Recipients: Anri Karanovich and Bikun Li

William E. Hassinger Graduate Fellowship

In Spring 2006, the physics department first presented the William E. Hassinger Graduate Fellowship as one of its most recent endowments. A physics graduate in the Class of 1950, Bill has been an enthusiastic supporter of our department. This fellowship was created to encourage and support students coming from the surrounding communities, who are pursuing graduate degrees in physics.

2021 Recipients: Joseph Camilleri, Jason Czak, and Nicholas Ekanger

Dr. James A. Jacobs Memorial Graduate Fellowship

The Dr. James A. Jacobs Memorial Graduate Fellowship was established in 2007 as a memorial to Dr. James A. Jacobs. Dr. Jacobs was a professor in the department from 1960-1978 and served as the department head from 1960-1973. Faculty and students who remember Dr. Jacobs and his numerous accomplishments established the award in his honor. It recognizes a graduate student who demonstrates academic excellence.

2021 Recipient: Youngmin Lim

Lubna R. Ijaz Scholarship

Following her receipt of a prize for her work in physics, Dr. Lubna Razia Ijaz donated the prize toward the establishment of a scholarship. She and her late husband, Professor Mujaddid Ahmed 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 Razia 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.

2021 Recipient: Youngmin Lim

James R. Dunn Award

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.

2021 Recipient: David Smith

Ray F. Tipsword Graduate Scholarship

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.

2021 Recipients: Eva Takou and Hong Yao

Wan-Zia Scholarship

Established by Prof. B. Schmittmann in 2012, the Wan-Zia Scholarship is endowed through generous donations from the friends and colleagues of Prof. R. K. P. Zia. Intended as a continuation of the C. H. Wan Scholarship, it is awarded to graduate and/or undergraduate students who are recognized for excellence in scholarship and active engagement in research.

2021 Recipient (Graduate): Adbhut Gupta

2021 Recipient (Undergraduate): Elijah Gendron

Award for Graduate Teaching Excellence

Established in 2007, this award recognizes excellence and exemplary commitment in the performance of teaching duties. It is awarded to a graduate student who exhibits outstanding rapport with undergraduates and successfully fosters understanding of physics concepts. The department strives to encourage and acknowledge this valuable contribution to our education mission.

2021 Recipients: Alison Gaylord, Nicholas Hurtado, and Nicholas Smith



Hugh D. Ussery Scholarship

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 re-mained 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.

2021 Recipients: Bella Brann and Jim Furches

Robert Lee Bowden, Jr. Essay Prize

In today's world, writing and communication skills for science students are becoming more critical. Almost all career paths require effective communication with non-technical audiences and the general public. In 2008, the Bowden Prize was established in order to encourage and reward excellent science writing.

2021 Recipient: Hana Mir

Daniel C. & Delia F. Grant Scholarship

In 1990, a scholarship was 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.

2021 Recipients: Dylan Bloodworth, Summer Chenoweth, Zachary Hoelscher, Brian Kearney, Reece Preisser, Fernando Ramos-Diaz, and Cathleen Ridder

Frank Leigh Robeson Scholarship

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.

2021 Recipients: Nathan Tompkins and Lyubo Trayanov

Ladies of Robeson Award

The Ladies of Robeson Award was established in 2019 through a gift by alumna Dr. Annalisa Pawlosky and Google. Awards are given to female undergraduate students who will pursue a graduate program, and to female graduate students who will pursue a post-doctoral position, outside of Virginia Tech.

2021 Recipient (Undergraduate): Lia Compton, Izel Giovannelli, Julia Kawas, and Haydee Portillo

2021 Recipients (Graduate): Rathsara Herath Mudiyansele and Riya Nandi

Robert C. Richardson Scholarship

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 and master's degrees in physics at Virginia Tech, was the co-recipient of the 1996 No-bel Prize for physics. This scholarship is awarded to an undergraduate physics major deemed especially deserving. This scholarship rewards academic talent, responsibility, and industry.

2021 Recipients: Steven Busby, Hunter Cowden, Emily Frank, RJ Loyd, Hana Mir, Jacob Morriss, Reegal Patel, Taelor Ryel, Jacob Speers, and Clint Vaughan

Robert P. Hamilton Prize

The Hamilton Prize is named in honor of Dr. Robert Preston Hamilton, who received his Bachelor's degree from Virginia Tech in 1974. 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, four 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 nine 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.

2021 Recipient: Timothy Proudki

Webster & Sara Schoene Richardson Memorial Scholarship

Both Webster 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.

2021 Recipients: Emma Brown, Lucas Hughes, Zachary Milne, Yannick Pleimling, and Rocco Salvato

H.Y. Loh Award

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 standards.

2021 Recipients: Izel Giovannelli, Olti Myrtaj, and Liam Welch

Thank You!

The Department of Physics would like to thank all of our awards recipients, their loved ones, our generous donors, the College of Science, and our faculty and staff, without whom this would not be possible.