

Physics Camp

Born in New Mexico

“This silly game of simple questions turned into a major bonding moment...”



STUDENTS FROM OUR CAMP participating in the hands-on portion of our demo hour. Photos courtesy of Khadijih Mitchell

SPS CHAPTER CREATES UNEXPECTED BONDS OVER THE SUMMER

by Khadijih Mitchell, SPS Chapter President, Class of 2016 at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces

On the last day of physics summer camp, we all sat in a circle and passed around a juice pack, which served as a sort of hot potato. The person with the juice had to answer one of several questions that we had formulated the day before, such as “Who is your favorite scientist?” or “What is your favorite shape?”

This silly game of simple questions turned into a major bonding moment for everyone involved. The high school students attending our camp talked about their fears and concerns about the future. They showed us their personalities outside of the physics-related activities we had been doing together for days.

I and the three other SPS members in the circle running the camp talked about our pasts, our struggles, and the high points of

our physics careers. We connected.

The students also shared their appreciation for the experiences they had at our physics camp, the first one ever organized by New Mexico State University (NMSU). The idea started in January, when Stefan Zollner, head of our physics department, challenged our SPS chapter to organize and produce a summer event to teach high school students physics concepts.

In July we hosted 10 students from several different schools for five days. The experience was free of charge and consisted of lab experiments, demos, presentations, and tours. Students learned about forces, waves, resonant modes, electricity, and magnetism. They were able to visit laboratories in the physics department and other departments on campus. We also organized a movie night

and a trivia game. SPS member Joni Clark documented the entire experience so future SPS leaders will have a baseline from which to grow.

By the end, it was clear that the students had a wonderful time and felt like they had benefited greatly from the experience. The Society of Physics Students chapter at New Mexico State University greatly values reaching out to our community. We were grateful for the opportunity to produce this summer camp.

A special thanks to the SPS summer mentors, Chas Hammond, Joni Clark, and Tegan Fuqua; our department head, Dr. Stefan Zollner; and to Zahra Nasrollahi, Rosa Christensen, and Loretta Gonzalez for making the summer camp both possible and a huge success. //