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NEWS

Awards & Honors

Betsy Beise, Professor, was awarded the 2008 George A. Snow Memorial Award, for the many ways that she promotes women in physics. From her outstanding mentorship of female students to her participation in the American Physical Society's Committee on the Status of Women in Physics to her efforts in organizing a "women in physics" group within the department and university, her commitment to advancing the representation of women in the field is truly impressive. And she has managed this along with the tremendous efforts she has put in for the Strategic Plan and Curriculum Development.

The George A. Snow Memorial Award was established in honor of the late George Snow, a UMD high energy physicist who died in 1992.

Katepalli Sreenivasan, Professor, is the recipient of the American Physical Society's 2008 Nicholson Medal for Human Outreach "for his commitment to mentoring students and junior colleagues and his significant contributions to fostering international collaborations and promoting the advancement and education of early career scientists from the developing world." The Medal was established in 1994 to recognize the humanitarian aspects of Physics and physicists.

The University of Maryland Department of Physics and Condensed Matter Theory Center announce the establishment of the Richard Prange Prize and Lectureship in Condensed Matter Theory and Related Areas. The Prange Prize honors **Professor Prange**, whose distinguished career at Maryland spanned four decades. He died suddenly on September 24, 2008, at age 76.

More Information at:
http://umdphysics.umd.edu/index.php/component/content/article/263.html

In the News

Robert Park, Professor Emeritus, participated in Joy Cardin's radio show on November 19th. Dr. Park discussed his takes on religion, prayer and the afterlife.

Douglas Currie, Professor Emeritus, was quoted in the September 10th issue of the National Geographic News. The article was about the recently published theory on star death.

Sankar Das Sarma, Professor, was interviewed by Science Watch regarding his highest cited paper in the research area of two-dimensional graphene, "Dielectric Function, Screening and Plasmons in Two-Dimensional Graphene."

Nick Hadley, Professor, and Sarah Eno, Professor, were mentioned in the Chronicle of Higher Education on September 12th. The article was about the Large Hadron Collider's (LHC) stretching schedules, budgets and researchers.

Chuan Sheng Liu, Professor, was one of four researcher cited in Science Centric on September 8th. The article was about their study of the properties of quantum SPPs at the interface between an electron quantum plasma and a dielectric material. Their research will be published in Europhysics Letters.

The University of Maryland-led **Milagro collaboration**, comprised of scientists from 16 institutions across the United States, has discovered two nearby regions with an unexpected excess of cosmic rays.

This is the second finding of a source of galactic cosmic rays relatively nea Earth announced in the past week. In the November 20 issue of the journal Nature, **ATIC** an international experiment lead by LSU scientists and conceived by a University of Maryland physicist announced finding an unexpected surplus of cosmic-ray electrons from an unidentified, but relatively close source.

More Information at:
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RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Ellen Williams' Inaugural Article and Profile in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)

Distinguished University Professor Ellen Williams has published her inaugural article, entitled "Dynamic Interfaces in an Organic Thin Film, for the September 2008 Issue of the prestigious *Proceeding of the National Academy of Sciences* (PNAS). John Weeks, Affiliate Professor o Physics & Distinguished Universtiy Professor, is a co-author.

Dr. Williams has been a member of the department since 1981. Her research focuses on organic materials with semiconducting properties. Sh was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 2005.

The PNAS is one of the world's most-cited multidisciplinary scientific serials. Since its establishment in 1914, it continues to publis cutting-edge research reports, commentaries, reviews, perspectives, colloquium papers, and actions of the Academy. Coverage in PNAS span the biological, physical, and social sciences.

To read Ellen Williams full inaugural PNAS article, visit: http://www.pnas.org/content/105/43/16418.full
For more information regarding Ellen Williams, read her PNAS Profile at: http://www.pnas.org/content/105/43/16415.extract

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ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Q & A with Thomas G. Mason

Thomas G. Mason, '89, started at the University of Maryland as a second semester sophomore at age 16. He was initially an Electrical Engineering major but decided to get a dual Physics major as well. Below are his responses to questions regarding his experience at Maryland.

What led you to the University of Maryland?

I love Maryland as a state, and I consider it to be my home state, since I lived in Maryland during my formative years from 5-20 years old. Maryland has excellent programs in engineering, physical science, and mathematics. I turned down an offer to attend Stanford because I knew about Maryland's excellent reputation in these fields and because I was offered a Chancellor's scholarship. I didn't want to create a difficult financial situation for my family, since Stanford offered no financial aid, and I was also quite young, so living away from home yet closer by so I could see my family on the weekends had a lot of benefits.

How would you describe your experience here?

I had a wonderful experience at Maryland. As a member of the honors program, I lived in the Hagerstown dormitory and had the benefit of many bright friends who were also fun to be around. My first year at Maryland was perhaps the most fun experience in my life—classes went great, my eyes were being opened to Hamiltonian mechanics, and hanging out with my new friends was just amazing. The years after that were filled with mostly studying as I worked to complete my dual degree, and the mood of the campus changed a lot and became quite somber after the tragedy of Len Bias. I'm glad to see that Maryland has since won a national championship in basketball, and Gary Williams is a charismatic leader who has done a great job with the team and has really

helped Maryland.

Where do you currently work?

UCLA. I am an associate professor of chemistry and an associate professor of physics.

What does your position require you to do?

I teach undergraduate and graduate students chemistry and physics, and I have a very active research program in experimental physical chemistry and soft condensed matter physics. So far, five of my graduate students have received their PhD's, and I regard this as the most personally rewarding part of my job. Two of them are now postdocs at Harvard, heading for great careers in research, and all of them have found jobs.

Do you enjoy your career?

I really enjoy my career. There are so many possibilities for doing interesting things that are beneficial to others and society. I left my industrial job to come back to the university where the environment was more challenging to me because of how open-ended the possibilities are. The personal interaction that I have with students is wonderful, and I feel that this is a beautiful part of the academic system. You receive from past generations, and you give back to future generations. The university life is challenging, and money is hard to find these days, but I enjoy the challenges and I wouldn't trade the high moments of success that I and my students have shared.

What was your first job out of college?

My first job was actually when I was in college, during the summer. I was a computer salesman. I think being a salesman is a good start for anyone in this society because you need to understand more about how consumers think. It exposes you to a lot of different personalities, and this is important in any career.

What advice would you give current students? Do you remember any problems that you faced while here?

Find a quiet place where you can study and go there regularly; then hang out with your friends and have fun after your homework is done. I used to go every night to remote corners of the smaller libraries. Try every problem on your own and only talk to friends about answers after you've really given each problem your best shot. After studying, I would come back and play cards or watch a show and talk to my friends. I could really enjoy it because nothing was looming over my head. Find a roommate who doesn't snore—that can help a lot, too.