SPS Elections – Candidate Statements

Co-Presidents

Anna Biggs:

I believe that SPS can help create an environment where more undergraduates feel connected, assured, and at home in the physics department. My goals are twofold: to lend a stronger student voice and presence to initiatives that the department already coordinates, and to foster a supportive community for people of all backgrounds to enjoy physics at Harvard. Here are a few ideas about how, if elected co-president, I would begin to pursue these goals. First, I’d like to co-organize more events with Women in Physics. I’ve been a member of WiP for the past few years and know that both groups could benefit from feeding off of one another’s audiences and planning power. I’d also like to make the SPS website a more useful resource. The Harvard Physics department webpage already contains a lot of pertinent advice and resources for undergrads. I envision the SPS page becoming place for more informal, student-driven content, such as a page to document the “cool physics” talks, a page for students to advertise old physics textbooks that they’re selling/lending, and information about graduate courses from an undergraduate perspective (ex. what background is assumed, what resources are useful, a realistic gauge of hours per week). I also know from experience that summer is a great time to meet new people and connect over activities we don’t have time for during the semester (ex. hikes, board-game nights, bike rides, a paint night, baking, etc.) In that vein, I’d organize gatherings for students doing physics research at Harvard over the break. Overall, I’m excited to facilitate positive connections, both academic and social, among students in the department—because physics is always better shared!

Sambuddha Chattopadhyay:

I would like to run for SPS President for the 2018-2019 school year. I would like to do this because I believe that through SPS we should do more to encourage kids to go into physics and love the subject for what it is, not what high school makes it seem. As such, I would like to start a physics tournament (potentially co-hosted with the MIT SPS) for high school tournaments in the vein of HMMT. This would be a massive undertaking but I believe an outreach effort that could revitalize interest in this truly beautiful subject, interest that is often squashed by introductory physics classes. Although I am young, I have run my school’s math and physics teams, both of which are non-trivially sized clubs, and twice directed a math tournament with 200-300 participants.

Cal Miller:

As a member of the SPS board, I would like to (1) hold events to promote community and mentorship among physics students, perhaps with a big/ little peer advising program. (2) seek funding for free drinks and printing within the physics undergraduate lounge. We can’t let the mathematicians have nicer things! (3) help connect students to research opportunities at Harvard through events with faculty.
Elba Alonso-Monsalve: Elba Alonso-Monsalve is a junior studying Physics and Mathematics. She has served as the Co-President of Gender Inclusivity in Mathematics (GIIM) for a year and a half, managing and publicizing successful, widely-attended events such as Math Night, and compiling a peer-to-peer advising guide to the Mathematics Department. She co-organized last year’s Women in Math and Statistics Conference (WIMS 2017), which drew attendance from all over the country. Elba is very involved with the Women in Physics group. She also serves as the Manager of the Loomis-Michael Observatory atop the Science Center and teaches members of the Harvard community how to operate the telescope that it hosts. As an international student, she also knows what it’s like to have learned physics in a different language before coming to Harvard.

Vaibhav Mohanty: Vaibhav Mohanty is a junior studying Chemistry and Physics. He has extensive experience with planning and publicizing events, managing funds, and increasing outreach for student organizations such as the Harvard Composers Association, for which he is Co-President, and the Ec dysis journal for the artistic expression of science, where he is Associate Editor for Auditory Arts and Technology Chair. Vaibhav has been conducting theoretical physics research on electron dynamics in graphene since his sophomore year, and he has presented his research at the Harvard-MIT SPS Conference among others. As a recipient of a National SPS Travel Award for research presentation, he is grateful for what SPS beyond Harvard has to offer and is eager to promote, develop, and publicize such opportunities on and off campus.

“We, Elba Alonso-Monsalve and Vaibhav Mohanty, would be honored to serve as the next Co-Presidents of the Harvard Society of Physics Students. Together, we represent the three most common fields of study (physics, math, and chemistry) for SPS members and are aware of physics students’ needs and expectations across disciplines. After almost three years in the Physics department, we are committed to giving back and are eager to help SPS grow for the generations of students to come.

As Co-Presidents, we would do our best to ensure all students feel welcome in the department, regardless of identity, background or career plans. We would like to develop a mentorship program in which seasoned concentrators and graduate students provide prospective and new concentrators with advice to help them make the most of their experience in the Physics Department. One of our first projects would be to revamp the SPS Handbook to include a broader variety of classes, research, and funding opportunities directly relevant to physics undergraduates. With our experience organizing events, we are interested in expanding the Harvard-MIT conference to welcome students of other local universities, while also making sure all of the cherished annual events run smoothly.”

Kai Trepka: Goals as co-president:

-Create a booklet/brochure publicizing research and conference funding opportunities, and make sure students understand what is required to get funding from the Physics Department

-Continue the Harvard/MIT SPS Conference to give undergrads scientific presentation experience and give students an overview of cool stuff other students are doing

-Encourage attendance at Physics Colloquium lunches, including pubbing to related fields/lists (i.e. CPB/MCB when a biophysicist comes, or the Math Department when a theory person comes)
Secretary

Davis Lazowski:

The strength of the physics community here has meant a lot to me, and I’d like to give back as secretary. I have a lot of event organization and pubbing experience here at Harvard, for instance as a current co-chair of the science fiction association. I’m an organized individual, and excited about helping SPS out!

Michael Yue:

Throughout my time at Harvard, I’ve found the Physics Department and the undergraduate physics students in general to be an extremely welcoming community. As part of the SPS board, I would work to continue and grow that sense of community through social gatherings (like the liquid nitrogen ice cream socials) as well as academic events (promoting speakers and increasing undergraduate awareness of talks like the Cool Physics Talks or the Monday colloquiums).

Event Coordinator

Abijith Krishnan:

Hi everyone! I am Abijith Krishnan, a sophomore physics and mathematics joint concentrator. Over my two years at Harvard, I’ve witnessed the ability of SPS events to bring the physics undergraduate community together. After all, as we all know, the appeal of having Liquid Nitrogen Ice Cream with your friends is unparalleled. Over the past semester, I’ve had the wonderful opportunity to help out at quite a few SPS events, from setting up the annual physics BBQ to dropping a few pumpkins outside of Jefferson. I’ve even worked to organize physics events outside of SPS during my time at Harvard. Every November and February, I’ve been organizing a physics puzzles mini-event for high schoolers attending the Harvard-MIT Math tournament. Bringing together people passionate about physics is something I deeply care about, and being the SPS event-coordinator is a great way for me to do just that.

Alex Kelser:

As events coordinator, I would do my best to coordinate events for the Society of Physics Students. We could also do uncoordinated events if people would prefer that. One classic coordinated event is the serving of liquid nitrogen ice cream. Under my tenure, I would expand the menu to include different flavors such as metallic hydrogen, supplied by Kaan. Finally, I have a spacious suite in Quincy that could accommodate the notorious SPS ragers (I already host the notorious Bach Society Orchestra ragers). In sum, I believe that my deep passion for event coordination makes me well-suited to hold this prestigious office.

Xilin Zhou:

I’d like to serve on board as Event Coordinator because I think the Harvard physics community is made up of great people and ideas and I’d like to help out in providing a space for these people and ideas to come together (preferably with good food)! I also have experience organizing events as a board member of Harvard Radio and the Harvard Korean Association. Thanks so much!
Webmaster

Nisarga Paul:

Ever since I was a young boy, my dream has been to become the Webmaster of the Society of Physics Students at Harvard College. I have prepared extensively for this position and gained experience through various avenues, and I believe that I have what it takes to become the Webmaster.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy once said “Ask not what your country can do for you -- ask what you can do for your country.” I believe this spirit of service and sacrifice is evident in my endeavors throughout my time at Harvard and in my involvement with the Harvard Physics department. For example, I’ve attended all three of the physics department barbecues since Fall 2015.

I plan on continuing my record of selfless dedication to the department and its students if I am given the honor of becoming the Webmaster of the Society of Physics Students at Harvard College. I believe in the potential of the SPS website and it would be my privilege to become its Guardian.