SPS OFFICER CANDIDACY STATEMENTS
For 2019-2020

Co-President

Note: some candidates have chosen to release a joint statement. When voting, you may choose up to 2 candidates for Co-President. Those who have chosen to release a joint statement will have their names separately.

Sambuddha Chattopadhyay ’20 (also running for Events Coordinator)

I’ve really liked my time at Harvard so far, particularly in the physics department. However, I think that we can play a role in improving freshman advising and am interested in starting an advising-buddy system for interested participants. Details need to be ironed out, but I think this could be a big step towards making freshman seem welcome and also towards increasing inclusivity in the department. Moreover, I think we should do more all-physics activities such as a kickball game.

Maya Burhanpurkar ’21 and Natasha Abrams ’21

Maya is a sophomore in Quincy studying Physics and Computer Science and Natasha is a sophomore in Winthrop studying Astrophysics and Physics. We would love to make the Society for Physics Students a more active community in both a mentoring sense (such as a Big (Morin)/Little (Einstein) program) and for students of similar experience. As SPS Co-Presidents, we would host bi-weekly events such as Fermi problem challenges, Cards Against the Scientific Establishment games, viXra paper discussions, and bad physics movie watch parties, in addition to the traditional liquid nitrogen ice cream parties and pumpkin drop. As of now, we feel as though physics students do not have much of an opportunity to interact outside of class, psets, or an occasional SPS event, so we would like to rectify this and encourage a stronger community. And don’t forget, to us, ~YOU~ put the special in special relativity <3.

Sam Detmer ’21

I would be honored to serve as SPS Co-President. SPS has been very influential to me both as a chemistry and physics concentrator and in advanced standing for physics. I would like to give back to the community in the following ways:

1) Increasing awareness about HCRP and Physics Department funding, especially to freshmen who are taking physics classes. I did not know that these sources of funding were available when I planned my freshman summer, and would like to ensure that others know about these opportunities as well.
2) To set up a program where interested freshmen or sophomores can meet with an upperclass mentor for a meal at a dining hall to talk honestly about classes and advisors.

3) To work with faculty to make honors track classes such as Physics 191 more accessible to student athletes and others with conflicting schedules.

4) To foster a culture of excitement around physics by sending out a list of physics concentrators in each house, so that groups can meet up to talk about recent research events or just to connect.

5) Further publicizing the interesting physics and philosophy sessions hosted by Dr. Barandes, and possibly getting funding for food for these events. This could include meeting at dining halls for related informal discussions regarding physics and philosophy.

6) Updating the handbook to include information about a greater variety of graduate courses.

7) I would also like to ensure that an abundant supply of bacon and mashed potato pizza is ordered whenever Otto’s is delivered to SPS events. By taking these practical steps, we can make the SPS community a place that continues to provide valuable information and advice to student concentrators, while further strengthening the even more valuable community which unites us.

Youssef Abou El Neaj ’21 (also running for Secretary and Events Coordinator)

Having come out of a cultural bubble, where the idea of becoming an aspiring physicist would have unthinkable, the passion I have for physics has taken a slight detour. Now, it is not only the power of physics in describing the universe we live in that attracts me to the subject, but also its intrinsic utility in advancing our societies, both on the cultural and technological levels. And, with this mindset, as well as being someone who understands the barriers one might have to overcome in order to follow an unconventional route in life, may that be Physics or otherwise, I consider myself held responsible for making a change, not only within the Physics community, but also among the general Harvard community. And it is because I have this ambitious vision, I am electing myself to become a co-president of the Society of Physics Students.

As Physics students, we aspire to master the technical details of the subject, in order for us to become capable of solving the problems nature poses before us, and that itself is a magnificent way of thinking; however, what we often fail to realize is how much influence we can make on the community. As a physicist, you understand the laws of nature in tremendous detail, the nature that we ourselves are part of. You deserve to have your voice heard. As a co-president, my main vision would be to transform SPS from simply being a society that involves people with common interests, to a force that makes direct and measurable
impact at Harvard and beyond, through active campaigns, conferences and general events that attract both the physicist and the non-physicist. Furthermore, as someone who was privileged to get his hands on a research opportunity at the CERN lab, I envision to pass my experience in finding such opportunities and guide those who are ambitious meet their goals. I also aim to learn as much as possible from my experience at CERN this upcoming summer, in order to plan a project or a trip to the area that involves everyone who is interested. I also aim, to utilizing what Harvard has to offer even more, by not only planning events here on campus, but also by organizing retreats and trips to multiple research facilities around the US. And, in terms of acquired skills, I believe that being an active member in many clubs, both previously and here at Harvard, as well as being a Math-CA and a peer-tutor, have gained me a lot of experience in planning, organizing, well-executing ideas and most importantly time-management and working with others as a team. If I get this position, I will make sure to dedicate all the time and energy needed to make sure we run our personal best. By the end of 2019/20 year, I promise as a co-president to raise the voice of SPS and become an active force within the Harvard community, and way beyond.

Abijith Krishnan ’20 (also running for Events Coordinator)

Hi everyone! I am Abijith Krishnan (Abi), a junior physics and math concentrator. In the past year, I have had the honor of serving as your events coordinator alongside the other SPS board members: Elba, Vaibhav, Davis, and Nisarga.

In the past year, we expanded the former Harvard-MIT SPS Research Conference to the Greater Boston Undergraduate Physics Conference, so that more students could present their research to the Boston undergrad physics community. Additionally, we held our annual Senior Student Panel, and and we hosted two town halls, one of which was jointly held with the Physics Department’s Committee for Equity Inclusion.

Of all the events we hosted, I enjoyed our socials the most. Over the past year, we have increased the number of social events that we hosted, from occasional pizza socials
to the classic liquid nitrogen ice cream social. I especially enjoyed seeing the physics community hang out and take a well-deserved reprieve from our stressful classes. In that same vein, I have already proposed to the old SPS board the idea of hosting small study breaks often throughout the year. Bringing together people passionate about physics is something I deeply care about, and serving the SPS community as co-president would allow me to do just that.

Secretary

Youssef Abou El Neaj ’21
See statement above.

Events Coordinator

Sambuddha Chattopadhyay ’21
See statement above.

Abijith Krishnan ’20
See statement above.

Youssef Abou El Neaj ’21
See statement above.

Webmaster

Rajath Salegame ’21
I might not be able to solve differential equations, take first order Taylor approximations, or understand special relativity properly, but if there’s one thing I’m good at, it’s being online and updating my social media. As the SPS webmaster, I’m confident that I will be able to adequately fulfill my role and keep the website up to date on all the SPS events occurring, as well as making sure that our Facebook/social media pages are full of engaging, informative, and lit physics-related content and more importantly, memes. Thank you for your consideration.