Final PhysTEC Recognizes Outstanding High School Physics Teachers

Nationwide physics teacher preparation network recognizes outstanding physics teachers across the country

COLLEGE PARK, MD, July 10, 2018 — The Physics Teacher Education Coalition (PhysTEC) recently announced the creation of a new award program, PhysTEC Teacher of the Year. The award is designed to highlight the impact of recent graduates from physics teacher preparation programs in the classroom. Each of the winners was nominated by the PhysTEC member institution from which they graduated or received their teaching credentials. One national winner and several local winners were selected.

This year's National PhysTEC Teacher of the Year is Tiffany Taylor, who was nominated by the University of Arkansas. She is currently teaching at Rogers Heritage High School in Rogers, Arkansas. Taylor has sought to improve the visibility of the Advanced Placement (AP) Physics program in a variety of ways. Her teaching style is inquiry-based, because Taylor believes students learn better from interaction than lecture based. She follows lessons by posting classroom highlights on Twitter and maintaining a blog. This has increased the visibility of the class, as well as participation in the AP classes. From year one to year two of her teaching AP Physics Taylor's efforts increased enrollment from one section of twenty-six students to three sections and a total of eighty students. In the following years, enrollment increased so much that she spends each day only teaching AP Physics 1 and 2. Additionally, forty percent of her students represents traditionally underrepresented individuals (women and minorities). Outside the classroom Taylorchairs her high school's science career academy.

Taylor will receive a certificate of recognition from PhysTEC, funding to attend two professional physics conferences focused on teaching and teacher preparation, and a classroom materials grant of $1000.

The local PhysTEC Teacher of the Year winners will receive a certificate of recognition as well as official acknowledgement to their school administrators and local press. These winners are:

- Christine Audo, Topeka High School, University of Arkansas
- Matthew Blackman, Ridge High School, Rutgers University
- Ricardo Farfan, Berkmar High School, Georgia State University
- Gary Forrester, Hingham High School, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth
- Justin Fournier, Cypress High School, California State University Long Beach
- Bradley Gearhart, Hutchinson Central Technical High School, SUNY Buffalo State
- Chris Martin, Shenandoah Valley Governor's School, Virginia Tech
- Adam Pullen, The Westminster Schools Preparatory School, University of West Georgia

- Timothy Vitale, Clearview Regional High School, Rowan University
- Cameron Vongsawad, Copper Hills High School, Brigham Young University

PhysTEC, led by the American Physical Society (APS) and the American Association of Physics Teachers (AAPT), congratulates these outstanding professionals for their contributions to their schools and the physics community.

The United States has a severe, long-term shortage of qualified physics teachers. In 2013 the National Task Force on Teacher Education in Physics reported, “the need for qualified teachers is greater now than at any previous time in history.” Of the approximately 1400 new teachers who are hired to teach physics each year, only thirty-five percent have a degree in physics or physics education.

PhysTEC aims to improve the education of future physics teachers by transforming physics departments, creating successful models for physics teacher education programs, and disseminating best practices. The project has supported more than forty sites to build physics teacher education programs and established a national coalition of over 300 institutions committed to improving physics teacher preparation (see www.phystec.org for more details).

The PhysTEC project receives funding from the National Science Foundation and the APS Campaign for the 21st Century and is led by the APS in partnership with the American Association of Physics Teachers. For more information, contact Monica Plisch (plisch@aps.org), Director of PhysTEC and APS Director of Education and Diversity.

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About AAPT

The American Association of Physics Teachers (www.aapt.org) is a non-profit membership organization working to enhance the understanding and appreciation of physics through teaching. The AAPT supports the physics education community through peer-reviewed journals, summer and winter meetings, advocacy, and programs. The AAPT represents over 8,000 physics educators from around the world, primarily from institutions of secondary and higher education. Society headquarters are located in College Park, MD.

About APS

The American Physical Society (www.aps.org) is a non-profit membership organization working to advance and diffuse the knowledge of physics through its outstanding research journals, scientific meetings, and education, outreach, advocacy and international activities. APS represents over 55,000 members, including physicists in academia, national laboratories and industry in the United States and throughout the world. Society offices are located in College Park, MD (Headquarters), Ridge, NY, and Washington, DC.