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**Want to know more about us? Visit [www.cwu.edu/physics](http://www.cwu.edu/physics)**

## PHYSICS DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER : LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Greetings from the CWU Physics Department,

In 2016, we said farewell to Lind Hall and moved to a new state of the art building known as Discovery Hall with fully equipped teaching and research space. Our department now has eight full-time faculty members and four staff members. We have several distinct career-focused degree tracks including a new Biophysics Specialization that prepares students for careers in the boundaries of physics, biology, and medicine; and a Physics/Engineering Dual Degree Program that prepares students for careers in applied physics and engineering.



Front: Ben White, Nathan Kuwada, Erin Craig, Andy Piacsek, Bruce Palmquist

Back: Addison Wenger, Deanna Marshall, Cassandra Fallscheer, Darci Snowden, Michael Braunstein, Peter Zencak

We are especially proud of how our students have navigated the ever-changing landscape of the COVID-19 pandemic over the last two years. Despite the challenges they have faced, this cohort of students has responded with determination and passion as they pursue their goals. Wishing you all the best in the upcoming year!

Best,

*Erin Craig*

Erin Craig

## ALUMNI HIGHLIGHT: KAHMINA FORD (PHYSICS B.S. BIOPHYSICS SPECIALIZATION, 2021)

After receiving a prestigious National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowship during her senior year at CWU, Kahmina Ford began her graduate studies in fall 2021 in the UC Berkeley Biophysics Program, where she has been awarded the Chancellors Fellowship grant. During her first year as a graduate student at UC Berkeley, she has pursued her passion for medical applications of physics by participating in research on a form of Cancer cells called glioblastomas. As a mother of a young child and the first in her family to attend college, Kahmina has overcome many challenges to achieve her goals. After earning her Ph.D., she hopes to give back to the next generation in her role as an educator and scientist. We



are grateful to Kahmina for sharing her experiences with current CWU Physics students in an alumni seminar in winter 2022.

## ALUMNI HIGHLIGHT: NATALIE VELEZ (PHYSICS B.S., ASTRONOMY MINOR, GRADUATED 2022)

During her time at CWU, Natalie Velez excelled in her studies while also employed as a teaching assistant, physics and math tutor, and rock-climbing instructor. Natalie completed two challenging research projects in the physics department, including developing and testing novel rocket designs and using the CWU telescope to detect exoplanets. Natalie was the president of the CWU Chapter of the Society of Physics Students (SPS) for three years, notably hosting the annual Pumpkin Drop. Natalie was also the founder and president of the Rocket Club, and a founding member of Wildcat Rocketry, which recently participated in a national competition hosted by NASA. In 2021, Natalie was awarded the Sharon Rosell Award for Outstanding Contributions to Physics Outreach. In 2022 she received the CWU College of the Sciences Student of the Year Award in Physics. In fall 2022, Natalie began graduate studies in the Physics PhD program at the University of Oregon.



## WILDCAT ROCKETRY

The Wildcat Rocketry team from CWU Physics was selected to compete in the 2022 NASA Student Launch, where 60 student teams from 22 states and Puerto Rico participated in a month long challenge to design, build, test and fly a high-powered amateur rocket carrying a scientific payload to an altitude between 4,000 and 6,000 feet. Over the course of the 2021-2022 school year, the Wildcat Rocketry team engineered, built, and tested their rocket and payload design. They also prioritized engagement with the local community, leading



rocket launch events for local students from elementary-aged Cub Scouts to high school students. According to Wildcat Rocketry student leader Henry Reinhart, "I think a lot of people get swept up in science being really complicated. Doing this brings out new passions and new opportunities. Hopefully it develops new rocketeers in the future." In April 2022, the team traveled to the Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama along with their faculty mentor Dr. Darci Snowden for the culminating NASA student launch.

## ALUMNI SEMINARS, 2021-2022:

**Fall quarter seminar:** Julia Raible (Physics B.S., 2018) shared about her experience in the University of Oregon Knight Campus Graduate Internship Program and her internship at Lockheed Martin in Bothell, WA to build high powered fiber lasers.

**Winter quarter seminar:** Kahmina Ford (Physics B.S. Biophysics, 2021) presented about glioblastoma research in the Biophysics Ph.D. program at UC Berkeley.

**Spring quarter seminar:** Paul Hoffman (Physics B.A., 1999) shared about careers in engineering and his work as the Principal Engineer at Allegro Microsystems in Hood River, OR.

We'd love to hear from you! Send an email to [physics@cwu.edu](mailto:physics@cwu.edu) if you'd like to visit, give a seminar, or connect over zoom.

## IN MEMORIAM: PROFESSOR SHARON ROSELL



After a 2-year battle with cancer, former CWU physics professor Sharon Rosell died July 3, 2020. She taught at CWU for 25 years. Upon retirement, she was granted Professor Emeritus status to commemorate her years of service. She advised the CWU Society of Physics (SPS) chapter, winning outstanding chapter awards nearly every year. Professor Rosell was honored with a CWU Distinguished Faculty teaching award in

2011 and was named the national outstanding SPS chapter advisor in 2013. Each year, the physics department awards the Sharon Rosell Memorial Prize for Leadership to a student who has made exceptional contributions to public outreach efforts. For more information about Sharon Rosell's life and family, go to <https://www.tuellmckee.com/obituaries/sharon-lynn-rosell/42557>.

## NASA AWARDED \$8.5 MILLION TO FUND NORTHWEST EARTH AND SPACE SCIENCE PATHWAY (NESSP)

Central Washington University received some out-of-this-world news when NASA awarded \$8.5 million over the next four years to help recruit and inspire the next generation of scientists and science teachers in underrepresented communities. This money will fund Northwest Earth



and Space Science Pathway (NESSP),

which is directed by CWU physics professor Darci Snowden and managed by former physics advisor Deanna Marshall. "The point of this program is to use NASA science to engage and motivate rural and underrepresented students so that they stay interested in pursuing STEM careers in our region," notes Professor Snowden. Over the past few years, Snowden and Marshall have worked with CWU faculty, staff, and students to organize and run summer STEM camps, including the wildly successful "Explore Mars Academy" and "High Altitude Balloon Academy". This new funding will allow CWU to expand science outreach. For more information about this project, go to <https://www.cwu.edu/news/features/nasa-awards-85m-cwu-build-stem-interest-underrepresented-communities>.

