



University of Pittsburgh

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Department of Physics and Astronomy*

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Dear Incoming Graduate Student:

Congratulations on being accepted to the University of Pittsburgh Department of Physics and Astronomy! The current graduate students would like to welcome you into the department and our social organization known as the Association of Physics and Astronomy Graduate Students, or APAGS. APAGS serves two main purposes: as a voice in the department for the graduate students and as a center for social activities within the department.

As the appointed APAGS Co-Presidents, we would like to extend a warm welcome to all of you new graduate students joining our department. Please feel comfortable to approach us with any problems and/or concerns related to graduate student life within and outside of the department. Also, you will surely find that most of your fellow graduate students are valuable sources of advice and guidance – use them well!

APAGS serves to entertain and educate graduate students in our department. We try to hold approximately one party each semester. In the past, these parties have varied from Halloween and Christmas parties to frequent beer and pizza get-togethers. Occasionally gatherings are also held to help first and second year graduate students mingle with more senior students to discuss topics such as teaching and getting into research. The events are held in a central location for the department and we often encourage the faculty and staff to join us. In order to share the burden of organization of our parties, specific tasks may be assigned to those who volunteer to help. After you get settled into the department, please let us know if you have any interest in being involved in organizing.

Also, each Wednesday the department supplies bagels and donuts for the 4:00 PM departmental coffee hour. The coffee hour and the parties are great ways to get to know your fellow graduate students as well as the faculty members and staff. We encourage you to take full advantage of these opportunities.

Now, here is some more timely and useful information: the first major issue you will have upon arriving is finding a place to live. Most graduate students at PITT live in the neighborhoods of North & South Oakland, which are within walking distance to campus, or Squirrel Hill and Shadyside, which are a short, free bus ride away. It is not difficult to find a combination of inexpensive rent and easy access to the department in other nearby neighborhoods as well. Our recommendations are to search by using the university off-campus housing website (<http://www.ocl.pitt.edu/>), looking in the classifieds section of local newspapers, browsing on-line real estate services, or wandering around the neighborhoods you are interested in looking for "For Rent" signs and calling the posted phone number, and last but not least, asking other graduate students about the different neighborhoods and/or apartment complexes and management companies. Good luck!

We would like to once more congratulate you on behalf of all physics graduate students and welcome you to our department. If you have any questions that we may be able to help you with, feel free to contact us. We look forward to seeing you this fall!

Sincerely,

APAGS Co-Presidents: Olivia Lanes (otl1@pitt.edu) and Daniel Perrefort (djp81@pitt.edu)