

Abstract Submitted
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Using Research in Plasma Physics and Astrophysics to Increase Freshmen Retention DERETH DRAKE, Valdosta State University — Many university physics programs struggle with increasing or retaining freshmen students. At Valdosta State University, historically the retention rate in physics has been very low, ~33%. In Fall 2017, our department started examining ways to increase our retention rate by using first year research opportunities. That year, two freshmen female students were invited to participate in research. Both students were retained to their sophomore year. With the limited success that year, in Fall 2018 we invited 7 of the 15 incoming freshmen to participate. The students participated in five projects throughout the year in astrophysics and plasma physics. All seven students were retained to their second year. Of the eight who did not participate only a fraction were retained. This presentation will describe the program in more detail, discuss the challenges faced during implementation process, and show the programs goals and plans for the current and next academic year.

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