

MAR15-2014-020631

Abstract for an Invited Paper
for the MAR15 Meeting of
the American Physical Society

How to double the number of undergraduate physics majors

SACHA KOPP, SUNY Stony Brook

Many colleges and universities around the country have a solid physics program that prepares students bound for graduate physics study. For a variety of reasons, the number of students choosing to major in physics may be small, typically <1% of the student body. When compared to other majors, this population is experiencing negligible growth. I will describe a campaign launched while at the University of Texas at Austin aimed at recruiting and retention of majors. This campaign includes actual programmatic changes in the curriculum and instruction of majors. Additionally, it includes a direct marketing campaign that attempted to change student attitudes about physics and its relation to their current major. Finally, it includes a program to reach out to local high schools and engage students in a discussion about their career choices before they apply for college. I will share some numerical and attitudinal data that suggests positive changes in the student population.