

DAMOP18-2018-020022

Abstract for an Invited Paper
for the DAMOP18 Meeting of
the American Physical Society

Identifying Barriers to Applying to Graduate Physics Programs, An Intersectional Approach

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Intersectionality, the interaction of multiple identities and power dynamics, has implications regarding the access and opportunities afforded to individuals. For ethnic/racial minority students that are underrepresented in physics, their ethnic/racial identities interact with other identities in ways that create barriers for applying, and in some cases, getting admitted to graduate school. The purpose of this study was to identify those barriers. Through a content analysis of student responses to an open-ended question on the APS Bridge Program application, themes regarding barriers to applying were determined. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with first year graduate students in the APS Bridge Program to expound on these themes. In this talk, I will present the themes identified and share the story of one of the APS Bridge Program participants that illustrates the ways in which the impact of her multiple social identities influenced her decision not to apply directly to graduate physics programs.