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Riding light in the minority communities and how K-12 students can shine in physics

PAUL GUEYE, Hampton University

The National Society of Black Physicists, along with the National Society of Hispanic Physicists, has been reaching out to the minority K-12 population by revolutionizing its Science Ambassador program under its Pre-College Program Committee. Since 2005, both societies have been providing unique interactive physics demonstrations to predominantly minority schools to expose them to the exciting world of physics. In a four year span, the population of targeted students went from 25 (2005) to 400 (2009). During the 2009 joint annual meeting, a Physics Day camp was introduced during which eight physics societies combined their efforts to reach to a larger group of students in a short time period. This initiative has now tackled the unique feature to expand nationally by reaching out to the members of all physics societies. While the world of optics has been an integral part of the demonstrations being performed on stage or at individual booths, physics concepts and its applications in medical physics (such as imaging or therapy) is the focus of the 2010 effort as part of LaserFest. This talk will review the impact of this program in the minority community and the importance of physics department at minority institutions in changing the conception of science in K-12 arenas.