

Abstract Submitted  
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**From Start to Finish: Retention of Physics Undergraduates**

DONNA HAMMER, TIM UHER, University of Maryland — The University of Maryland Physics Department’s NSF Scholarships in Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (S-STEM) project is a unique program that aims to reduce the attrition of students that occurs in the “pre-major-to-major” gap – i.e., students who begin at the university intending to study physics, but do not graduate with a physics degree. To increase the retention of admitted students, the UMD S-STEM program is designed to provide student with financial assistance, a strong sense of community, academic support, and career planning. We will discuss how the program has been integrated into the curriculum and culture of the physics department, and focus on developing key components of the program: a nurturing environment, dedicated mentorship, early research experience, and professional development.

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