

## 43<sup>rd</sup> CUPC Retrospecticus

A look back at the conference from two perspectives

BY DAVID LEE AND RICKY CHU

The 2007 Canadian Undergraduate Physics Conference (CUPC) was held at Vancouver's Simon Fraser University (SFU) from 11–14 October 2007. More than 180 delegates from 31 schools across Canada came to listen to six special guest speakers, take part in a variety of lab tours, present their scientific work, and have fun with fellow physics students. The organizers of 2007 were faced with the historical fact that the last CUPC held at SFU was in 1974 and most notably featured Nobel Prize winner Richard Feynman.

in gear, buckled down, and got to work.

It wasn't always easy going; my co-chair Joel Zylberberg jokingly claimed to quit several times, and co-chair Elena-Bianca Barbir was working from afar, while on exchange in Australia. Fortunately, the addition of Jacob Cosman and Savanna Shaw to our ranks in July provided enough extra enthusiasm and manpower to keep the planning on track.

I hate to say it, but after all of that work, I think it was worth it. We had a lot of fun at the conference, and we're glad that everyone else did too! While we might have

attended her first conference, also had some comments:

"I had pictured physics conferences being all speakers and academics, but I had not in any way anticipated the amazing social experience that I ended up having. What I took away from CUPC 2007 were memories of people and not really physics, and while unexpected, it was probably a more rewarding experience than I could have imagined.

The setting was a big plus. Being by the ocean, getting to go into the mountains, and seeing the view from basically anywhere was amazing. SFU Burnaby campus is gorgeous! And the Stargate fan in me really enjoyed it too [editor's note: the TV science fiction series Stargate was occasionally filmed at SFU's Burnaby campus].

That weekend was the best party I have ever been to. It combined meeting amazing people and having so much fun with them, and getting to talk physics all the time. CUPC is going to be one of those memories that I keep with me for the rest of my life."

Students at the conference also met at their annual general meeting to decide where CUPC will be held in 2008. By a unanimous vote, the University of Toronto was selected as the next CUPC host. Another development from the meeting was the announcement of the creation of *cupc.ca* as a permanent source of information about the conference and its past iterations.

Sarah was also the presenter of the successful University of Toronto bid and had this to say about CUPC 2008:

"Delegates will be staying at a nice hotel in the heart of downtown Toronto. We are trying to contain the entire conference in the hotel, though now there is talk of having some of our keynote speakers in a University of Toronto facility. While I cannot promise you who we will

have, I can tell you that people will certainly be excited when we publish the names, i.e. at least two best-selling authors, another very popular and contentious author, and a Nobel laureate (or two!).

Lab tours will feature all major subfields of physics and include the following facilities: Canadian Institute for Theoretical Astrophysics; Centre for Quantum Information and Quantum Control; the Institute of Aerospace Studies, which has flight simulators, supersonic wind tunnels, robots, and a fusion energy lab; and the Museum of Scientific Instruments, mainly for historical interest.



The CUPC 2007 organizing committee: (from left) Joel Zylberberg, Elena Barbir, Savanna Shaw, Braden Brinkman, and Jacob Cosman (not shown).

With 2007's CUPC just recently past, we got the conference from the points of view of an organizer and a delegate. Here's what conference co-chair Braden Brinkman had to say about his experience:

"On a cold day in October 2006, in Fredericton, SFU physics students presented a bid to host the 2007 Canadian Undergraduate Physics Conference. With a successful bid, it would all come together by October 2007. Finally, we got our organizing committee

liked to have had more time to hang out the students, this was inevitably sacrificed in order to keep the conference running smoothly. We did, however, get out to many of the events at the conference. Our favourite parts of the conference included the tour of TRIUMF, playing pictionary while waiting for the National Research Council lab tour to start, Lene Hau's lecture, and meeting so many interesting students from across the country!"

Delegate Sarah Kavassalis,



Delegate and University of Toronto bid presenter Sarah Kavassalis gives the closing speech for CUPC 2007.

The University of Toronto is going to be putting in an amazing amount of effort into making this CUPC one that people are going to remember for a long time."

The organizers of CUPC 2007 at SFU greatly thank the numerous volunteers, members of the physics department at SFU, for all of their hard work in making the conference very successful. The organizers hope that everyone has a wonderful coming year and that all the attendees meet and reconvene in October 2008 at the University of Toronto.