

GRADUATE STUDENT CONFERENCE 2008

Umbrella organization: Society of Stevens Graduate Physics Students (SSGPS)

Participating Student Organizations and Departments:

- Graduate Student Society of Chemistry and Chemical Biology (GSSCB)
- Stevens Society of Mathematicians (SSM),
- Electrical and Computer Engineering Student Society
- Mechanical Engineering Department

Organizing Committee: Marko Zivkovic, Mary Schurgot, Gonca Altuger, Anton Molyboha, Yidi Zhang, Brittany Corn, Freneil Jariwala

Main goals of the conference:

- to inspire interdisciplinary research collaboration by presenting current research done by graduate students from each department
- to present research opportunities for fresh graduate students
- to present recent student research achievements of each department to whole Stevens community
- to create a good opportunity for students to get hands-on experience that will prepare them for future conferences

Format of the conference:

- one day conference with presentations and poster session (and a key-note speaker)

Date for the conference:

- still open, possibly end of September

The idea for organizing Graduate Student Conference 2008 comes as a natural extension of the former ISSA Graduate Student Conference. Recent merger of ISSA with School of Engineering gives us an excellent opportunity to take an event like ISSA Graduate Conference was and build on it. The very fact that we now have five more departments participating in it prompts the need for some necessary changes, which would allow us to make this conference bigger and more important than ever before. It is our intention to make this conference a recognizable brand in graduate student life at Stevens.

ISSA Graduate Student Conference has become a traditional event organized by SSGPS and other members of former ISSA. Its main purpose has been to present research done by graduate students from each department of ISSA and by that mean promote inter-department collaboration. It was a beautiful opportunity for graduate students to present their work in formal conference atmosphere and practice for more important conferences that would wait for them in later career. At the same time it was, sadly, one of the rare occasions when graduate students had the opportunity to interact with higher-level administration officials at Stevens, show them what kind of research has been done in their department during previous year and give them some ideas where would it be productive to allocate funding and energy of the School in next year.

The guiding ideas behind Graduate Student Conferences remain the same as before. Increased multidisciplinary nature of modern research, and similar trend at Stevens as well, is just one of many incentives to create an opportunity for graduate students to present their own work to students from different departments and fields who might be interested in similar problem. That could inspire some future interdisciplinary research, which would be beneficial to both departments (e.g. by increasing the number of published papers) and Stevens as whole (e.g. by improving its image of good, productive school with prolific multidisciplinary research).

At the same time a conference like this would present an ideal chance for new, fresh graduate students to get a grasp of what kind of research is conducted in their department (or some other department) and make an early decision what they would like to focus on. Their early start of research would pay off immensely by increased number of publications during their graduate studies, which would in turn make them more eligible for future jobs. More students getting better positions after they leave Stevens would improve Stevens' image in whole academic community.

This conference would be a splendid possibility for students to meet higher-level administration officials at Stevens face-to-face, present them their research and get some feedback. Mostly students have no input on how the organization of a school works, what is financial structure of department or how they project fits in it. Some students may have ideas that with proper help and vision from higher-authorities might yield impressive results, but which could fade away without adequate understanding and guidance.

Why don't we make it even bigger! Three-State Area Science and Engineering Graduate Student Conference ?

Pro:

- promoting Stevens
- peer competition from other universities can be beneficial for raising the level of graduate research in Stevens
- creating a traditional event that can center on Stevens and make bonds with surrounding academic communities even stronger, which can lead to more productive research

- VERY IMPORTANT: What an average student visitor thinks he could gain from this conference? (good answer to this is a key to finding a way how to attract more audience)

Questions we should address on the next meeting:

- inviting other universities to the conference and making a big conference with multiple sessions
- multiple sessions
- abstract proceedings with ISBN so that it can be put on CV
- conference promo material (posters, pens, folders, website, etc.)
- pre-registration
- moving key-note speaker to after-lunch session (PRO: more people would stay in early sessions waiting to hear this speaker; speaker could listen to previous talks and actually get some idea what is happening at Stevens... maybe even say something complimentary or include some references to previous talks in his own presentation)
- detailed duty delegation (communication with outside community, communication with Stevens community, promotion, food and refreshments, individual session organizations, chair of the committee)
- including other missing departments
- budget
- who could be the key-note speaker