

## Report from APS March Meeting

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### March 18, 2002 – “Rethinking Graduate Education”, Session A7

#### *Invited Talks*

1. "Preparing for Public Policy",  
Brendan Plapp, Optical Society of America
2. "Thinking about Expectations",  
Jeffrey Rogers, HRL Laboratories
3. "Light and Sound: Neglected Subjects in Physics Education",  
Thomas D. Rossing, Northern Illinois University

In the first talk of this session Brendan Plapp from the Optical Society of America introduced us to life on Capitol Hill. In his entertaining and interesting talk he described the process how PhD graduates can enter science policy in Washington. His talk gave an overview of the opportunities in science policy work. Based on his experience the most important and valuable skills in science policy work are writing, reading, keeping up with news and events, and communicating with people by phone or in person. While he greatly enjoyed his work as a Science Policy Fellow Plapp emphasized that the discussion of real science issues does not dominate your daily work on Capitol Hill. Although his talk was specifically on “Preparing for Public Policy” a lot of his remarks seemed generally applicable to graduate school and contained a lot of useful comments. Plapp encouraged students to actively take advantage of the opportunities in graduate school and develop a variety of skills. An electronic copy of his talk is available as a PDF document.

Jeffrey Rogers from HRL Laboratories (Malibu, CA) commented on his experience in different graduate programs and on his transition from academia to industry. His advice was very complimentary to Brendan Plapp's talk. Talking about graduate school experiences he emphasized the need for more communication between students and their advisors on the student-advisor relationship and their expectations. In the context of his current industrial research work Rogers emphasized the importance of communication and communication skills. In his comments he described how physicists are hired to perform a variety of tasks. In his view, physicists mostly act as translators to bring solutions and techniques to specific problems in industry. Rogers emphasized that the job market for physicists in industry is good and offers a diverse range of opportunities. He encouraged graduate students to consider the possibility of joint postdoc positions between university and industrial research laboratories.

Thomas Rossing gave an interesting talk on how classical topics such as light and sound still have a strong presence in fundamental research and should be emphasized in the modern graduate curriculum. In his discourse on light and sound he commented on the relation between physics and fine arts and concluded that physics can help develop a better understanding of arts. A written version of his talk is available as a PDF document.

## **March 18, 2002 – Student Social Hour**

### *Activities*

Welcome Words

Judy Franz

Helen Quinn

Karsten Heeger

FGSA Physics Quiz

Last year the APS organized the first Student Social Hour at a March meeting. This year was the first time this event was co-organized by the APS Forum on Graduate Student Affairs (FGSA). Students were invited to enjoy refreshments and snacks, meet fellow graduate students and representatives of the APS, and share their experiences. Several hundred students attended the reception and participated in a FGSA physics quiz, answering questions on the history of physics and physics trivia. Everyone enjoyed the food and had a good time. The event was sponsored by the APS and FGSA.

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FGSA Representative:        Karsten Heeger