My Experience at Undergraduate Women in Physics Conference CUWiP 2018 and Why You Should Do it too.

Figure 1: Kristin Barton, Stephanie Lough and Hanna Terletska at CUWiP poster session.

MTSU Physics major undergraduate female students **Stephanie Lough** and **Kristin Barton** and **Dr. Hanna Terletska** participated in CUWiP conference for the undergraduate women in physics held at UVa, January 12th- 14th, 2018. Students have shared their thoughts on CUWiP:

Q: Did you like the conference? and why?

Stephanie:

I did really like the conference. I like how it empowered women to keep pushing through barriers and to not let life deter one's goals. I do not know what I was expecting, but I was pleasantly surprised how much data they showed about women in STEM and how we are still a long way from being equally represented.

Kristin Barton:

Yes, I enjoyed it quite a lot. It was fun being able to travel somewhere new, even if for a weekend. There were also a number of incredible talks from inspiring women. This conference was a great way to see what else is out there in physics besides the little bubble we have here at MTSU.

Q: What was the most useful thing(s) you learned?

Kristin:

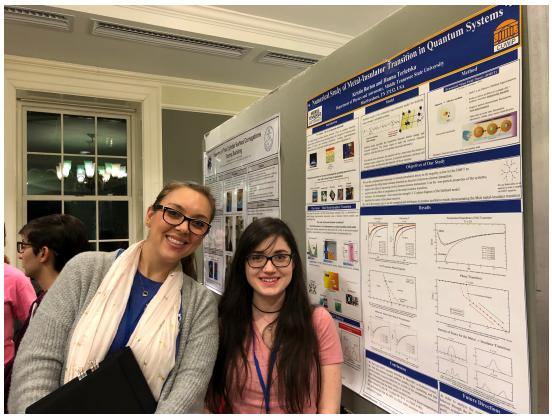
I think this trip really hammered in the importance of meeting new people. It's something I had always been told, but it really helped to see the truth of it firsthand. Every time you go out there and gain new experiences and connections, it opens up your future just a little more.

Stephanie:

Again, I feel like I learned a lot of statistics about women being underrepresented in STEM. These statistics were surprising and it motivated me to keep pursuing science. The women speakers did a great job at sharing their life experiences, including marriage and having children, and how they got through them while still pursuing a degree. I think women tend to feel overwhelmed with life at times and the conference helped us to see how it is all still possible.

Q: Would you encourage others to go?

Stephanie:



I would definitely encourage others to go. I do think that being a senior really helped me to soak some of the information in better. Also, Kristin and I were able to present our research which would not have been possible if we were freshmen. I think women further along in their degree probably benefit the most, but there is no harm in going to as many of these conferences as possible. We were able to tour the facilities at another institution, so that would benefit anyone that was curious about what else is out there.

Kristin:

Definitely! There is something to be gained for everyone (whether they are women or not!) by going to this event. The talks are a great way to learn about the struggles and successes of women and other minorities in physics and how we can all work to make things better. I also loved the poster presentations, which are a great opportunity to talk to others about research. Overall, it is both fun and productive way to spend a weekend!

Q: What would be nice to have established in this matter here at MTSU.

Kristin:

I think we have an amazing physics community at MTSU, but there are still very few women in the program. One of the biggest challenges for us is finding that group of people who can support us and help push us along. I think starting a Women in Physics club and working to recruit more women into it is a great first step. Additionally, I would like to see more opportunities for students to practice talking about their research.

Stephanie:

We are very lucky at MTSU, or at least Kristin and I are, since we have a decent amount of women in the Physics department. However, I think continuing to encourage women is a good thing. I have zero complaints about how the faculty treats women at MTSU. I think they are wonderful. However, I remember hearing that letters of recommendation tend to emphasize different things for male students vs female students. This may or may not be the case at MTSU and it is not necessarily a negative thing, but I think it would be good to share these statistics with the faculty so that they are aware of tendencies within STEM.