

FIU Southern Cross Astronomical Society Scholarship Recipients

2018

Sandy Alonso

Sandy Alonso followed his intuition to become a Physics major even though he had never taken a physics course. Originally, he decided to register for Observational Astronomy with no prior knowledge of the subject – just an interest. Sandy’s passion for physics and astronomy caught the attention of Dr. James Webb who encouraged him to join the Messier Project during the summer. He is currently one of the few students who work with the Stocker AstroScience Center and he enjoys nothing more than sharing his knowledge of the celestial bodies with his fellow peers. Sandy hopes to continue his studies and gain further experience in the field of astronomy.

2017

Cynthia Nunez

Cynthia Nunez is a Dean’s List student completing a Bachelor of Science in Physics with a minor in Astronomy. Cynthia first discovered the joy of problem-solving in high school, especially as it relates to understanding the fundamentals of the world around her through the study of physics. This growing interest has led to her current career aspiration which is to pursue a Ph.D. in Astrophysics.

As a first-generation college student whose family came to the United States when she was very young, this decision was not an easy one to make, given that at the time, it seemed to Cynthia such an unattainable goal to reach. Yet she persevered. She hopes to be a role model who can motivate others like her - minority women in higher education - to become scientists. Cynthia’s main research area of focus is the study of planetary formation and galaxy evolution. One of her physics professors remarked that “she was the best student in his observational astronomy class.”

Cynthia is well on her way to becoming a physics educator. She has led workshops for middle-school girls, completed over 55 hours teaching physics to primary and secondary students using the active learning model, and interned with the new Frost Science Museum where she developed a science field trip program for K-12 students. At the Frost, Cynthia enjoyed working with the lead developers of the planetarium and brainstorming astronomy opportunities for the public with the museum’s outreach coordinator.

In addition to her many academic achievements, Cynthia has also acquired new leadership skills since being at FIU. She is the President of the Society for Physics Students where she has planned many student activities. She is the Vice President of the Physics Honors Society, and secretary for Women in Physics and Astronomy at FIU, as well as for the Astronomy Club. She looks forward to advancing astronomical knowledge to solve the difficult questions of the future in the fields of astrophysics and astronomy. We wish Cynthia all the best and congratulate her on receiving the Southern Cross Astronomical Society Scholarship Award.

Stephen Revesz

Stephen Revesz has always kept his eyes on the prize. In spite of having to take two semester breaks while at FIU to work full time and save enough money to pay for his classes, Stephen continued working on his research in propulsion technologies, such was his strong intellectual desire to keep learning about astronomy.

Stephen is one of a few observational astronomers at the Stocker AstroScience Center which houses several telescopes. He gathers data for Dr. James Webb's astronomy research as well, organizes the Messier catalog, and hosts at various events. According to Dr. Webb, "Stephen has become one of our best observers and is qualified to open the 24" telescope on his own." This spring, Stephen was taking FIU's Observational Astronomy class and was able to do tons of work in the observatory. His work at the Stocker Center has taught Stephen a great deal, from capturing images and doing data reduction procedures, to more practical aspects, such as how to maintain a facility.

Toward the end of 2015, one of the Quasars Stephen was observing, quasar BL Lac, underwent a luminous outburst. With the skills he had acquired, Stephen was able to study the energy effects of the outburst. He has also taken many images at the observatory and then made them ready to post on the official Stocker AstroScience Center website. Look for the Picture-of-the-Week gold tab on the Stocker website to see Stephen's pictures as well as many other photos of galaxies, planets, stars, nebulas, and the moon. There's quite a collection!

Stephen is a Dean's List student working toward a Bachelor in Physics with a minor in Astronomy. He looks forward to being a regular presenter for the Southern Cross Astronomical Society meetings held here at FIU. He hopes one day to work in observatories around the globe and we wish him the best of luck for the future.

2016

Patrick Ford

Patrick Ford is a junior at FIU who likes to think of physics and astronomy as the focal point of his life. He has taught as a Learning Assistant and Teaching Assistant for both physics and astronomy classes. His research with Dr. Webb focuses on general photometry and imaging. Most recently he has been working on a project to improve understanding of star formation and he hopes to continue his research in graduate school in the field of astrophysics, with a

focus on galaxy formation and dark matter research. Having been very active in astronomy for many years, Patrick now serves as President of the FIU Astronomy Club, where he takes pride promoting awareness of astronomical research, presenting new findings and hosting telescope events. Ultimately, he hopes to become a teacher so he can continue to stimulate interest and educate others about the universe.

2015

Daniel Jesus Puentes

Daniel Puentes is a junior pursuing a major in physics and chemistry with a minor in astronomy. He is also a member of the social fraternity Sigma Alpha Mu. Daniel has competed as part of the FIU NCAA Division 1 Cross-Country and Track & Field for the past two and a half years. During his academic career here at FIU, he has been an active member of the Astronomy Club as well as the Society of Physics Students. In the past, he has completed several courses including Modern Astrophysics and is currently taking Observational Astronomy with Dr. James Webb. To add to the experience, Daniel has worked on the twenty four inch telescope situated in the Stocker AstroScience Center taking different images of objects, including but not limited, to M97, M108, and M109. This summer, Daniel will continue working with Dr. Webb and will assist him with his research here at FIU.

2014

Daniella Roberts

Daniella is a senior pursuing a major in physics with a minor in astronomy, and she is a member of the Sigma Pi Sigma physics honor society. After joining the Astronomy Club in 2012, Daniella became treasurer the following year and has been re-elected for the upcoming academic year. She has been a learning assistant for the Physics I Lab students the last two years. SCAS has played a major part in developing her love for astronomy, as she has attended all of their lectures and assists the society as much as possible. Being active in the Astronomy Club, Daniella has helped many students at star parties learn how to operate telescopes, find the seasons constellations, and answer many astronomy related questions. She is currently doing research under the supervision of Dr. James Webb, and will be conducting an independent study with him over the summer based on his research into micro-variability of Blazars.