

Physics Transfer Summit 2026 Impact Report

1. Overview

On February 20, 2026, the Physics Transfer Summit was hosted at Los Angeles Pierce College and was moderated and organized by Sherry Peng, a junior UCLA physics student and community college transfer.

112 attendees, spanning 35 institutions and 21 different majors, registered for this first-of-its-kind event, featuring 15 speakers. From quantum gravity to neurophysics to gravitational-wave astrophysics to dark matter to medical physics and more, we spent the day taking a small journey through the possibilities of the pursuit of physics.

2. Mission

This event was organized to inspire community college physics and physics-adjacent majors with physics' real-world impact, provide clear guidance on pathways from community college to research and careers, showcase the breadth of physics at a rigorous but high level, share insights from Southern California faculty, UCLA graduate students, and successful physics transfers, and create in-person connections among physics students across Southern California.

3. Speaker Overview

7 physics faculty from UCLA, USC, Caltech, LMU, and Pepperdine came to speak about their academic journey and research, including Alvine Kamaha (UCLA), Dylan O'Connell (UCLA), Vahe Perroomian (USC), Peter Chung (USC), Katerina Chatziioannou (Caltech), Jonas Mureika (LMU), and Gerard Fasel (Pepperdine). The concentrations of faculty talks included dark matter, medical physics, space science/science education, biophysics/neurophysics, gravitational-wave astrophysics, quantum gravity, and solar-terrestrial interactions.

7 UCLA physics graduate students came to speak on their undergraduate and graduate school experiences with physics, including Jonah Hyman, Diego Padilla, Gael Flores Avila, Joshua Lee,

Jacob Schagene, Luke Sellers, and Sara Saib. They were split into 2 panels, based on their research concentrations. Their concentrations included astroparticle theory, theoretical high-energy nuclear & particle physics, experimental particle physics, condensed matter, and neurophysics.

Additionally, Tessa Temme, alumna from LA Pierce College, transfer physics graduate from UCLA, and now an engineer at Space X came to share her journey from physics to engineering. Tessa, along with one UCLA graduate student, Sara Saib, spoke in the transfer panel on their success from community college to where they are now.

4. Attendee Data

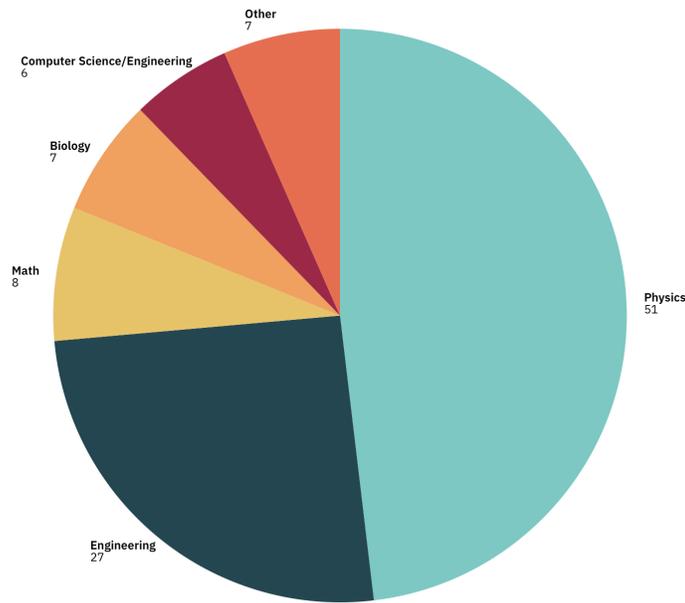
All institutions with at least one registration (A-Z):

Allan Hancock College
Cabrillo College
Cerritos College
Chaffey College
Citrus College
Coastline College
College Of Sequoias
College of the Canyons
Cuyamaca College
Deanza College
Diablo Valley College
Gavilan College
Golden West College
Irvine Valley College
Long Beach City College
Los Angeles City College
Los Angeles Mission College
Los Angeles Pierce College
Los Angeles Valley College
Los Medanos College
Mission College
Moorpark College
Orange Coast College
Porterville College

Reedley College
Rio Hondo College
Riverside City College
San Diego City College
San Diego Mesa College
San Jose City College
Santa Rosa Junior College
UCLA
Ventura College
Victor Valley College
West Valley College

All majors with at least one registration (A-Z):

Aerospace Engineering
Astrophysics
Biochemical Engineering
Biology
Biophysics
Chemical Engineering
Civil Engineering
Computer Science/Engineering
Electrical Engineering
Engineering Technology
Environmental Engineering
Geophysics
Kinesiology
Manufacturing Engineering
Math
Mechanical Engineering
Neuroscience
Nutrition
Physics
Psychology
Public administration



Number of attendees by major

5. Feedback

An anonymous feedback form was sent out to all attendees the same day of the event to assess value and to obtain positive and negative feedback to improve future physics outreach events. The results of the form were extremely important in identifying structural changes that could retain audience energy, engagement, and excitement throughout the event. We also wanted to quantify the value that individuals felt this event had on their academic journey and identify specific physics concentrations that students had more or less interest in.

5.1 Overall Value

We asked “Overall, how useful was today’s summit for you?” With a 1-5 star scale, the average rating was 4.89.

5.2 Key Positives

Overall feedback for the Physics Transfer Summit was overwhelmingly positive, with attendees consistently rating the event as highly useful. Students found the sense of community of physics students and faculty to be extremely exciting and rare to come across. It was mentioned many times that attendees’ favorite part of the event was gaining an overview of the fields one can

pursue in physics and sparked curiosity in fields they previously had not considered. Many expressed that the stories they heard from speakers inspired them and made them feel more enthusiastic about pursuing physics. The panels were frequently highlighted as the most valuable component, offering honest insight into research, graduate school, and transfer pathways, while also showcasing the passion and accessibility of the physics community. Several attendees shared that the summit reaffirmed their motivation to pursue physics, provided concrete topics and keywords to explore further, and left them feeling more confident about their next steps. Networking and informal conversations with speakers and peers were also repeatedly cited as a major strength, contributing to a strong sense of community and engagement throughout the event.

5.3 Selected Student Quotes

“This event was so good. I loved every minute of it and every presentation.”

“This event was exactly what I needed, and I left it feeling so much more motivated and encouraged to continue doing what I’m doing.”

“The most valuable part was talking to the speakers. I enjoyed learning more about them apart from their presentations.”

“All of it was amazing. It served as a great reminder as to why I’m pursuing physics and all the far-reaching and exciting applications it can have. It gave me certain topics/keywords to look for when doing my own reading or research.”

“One thing sentimental to me was hearing all the stories from a group of incredible people that overcame all the feelings and experiences I worry about. It brought into perspective that I am not alone, and even better there are people here I can befriend through it all.”

5.4 Areas for Improvement

It is unfortunately difficult to make everyone feel fully satisfied in an event with a broad and ambitious goal, though it is nevertheless essential to push to do so. Due to the limited amount of time and uncertainty of interests in attendees, we aimed to put together an array of speakers featuring diverse concentrations. However, it is apparent that some students wanted to hear more about plasma, nuclear, and other applied physics areas. Additionally, several students found the event to run too long with too few breaks. Also, several students suggested a dedicated mixer and networking session and extending lunch to allow for more social interaction. Another point was having speakers talk more to specific opportunities for community college students. Finally, it

was suggested that the event advertise how long each faculty member would be staying, as some faculty members left before students had the opportunity to speak with them.

6. Actionable Changes

Based on attendee feedback, the following changes will be implemented in future Physics Transfer Summits:

- Incorporate more frequent breaks to maintain engagement and energy
 - Introduce a dedicated networking mixer and extend lunch to allow for deeper interaction between students, faculty, and speakers
 - Clearly advertise speaker availability and how long faculty members will remain on-site.
 - Improve hybrid accessibility by ensuring consistent slide sharing and active moderation of Zoom chat.
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Appendix A. Event Schedule

Physics Transfer Summit 2026

Friday, February 20, 2026
Los Angeles Pierce College

8:15 – 9:00 AM
Check-In & Breakfast

9:00 – 9:10 AM
Opening Remarks & Overview

9:10 – 9:40 AM
Vahe Perroomian — Professor of Physics, University of Southern California
Space Science

9:40 – 10:10 AM
Alvine Kamaha — Assistant Professor of Physics, UCLA
Experimental Astroparticle Physics & Dark Matter Detection

10:15 – 10:45 AM

Graduate Student Panel I: Astroparticle, Particle & Fundamental Theory
Panelists (UCLA):

- Jonah Hyman — Astroparticle Theory
- Gael Flores Avila — Experimental Particle Physics
- Diego Padilla — Theoretical High-Energy Nuclear & Particle Physics

10:45 – 11:00 AM

Break

11:00 – 11:30 AM

Dylan O’Connell — Assistant Professor of Radiation Oncology, UCLA
Therapeutic Medical Physics

11:30 AM – 12:00 PM

Katerina Chatziioannou — Assistant Professor of Physics, Caltech
Gravitational-Wave Astrophysics

Lunch will be served from 12-1 PM

12:15 - 12:45 PM

Peter Chung — Assistant Professor of Physics, USC
Biophysics/Neurobiology

1:00 – 1:30 PM

Jonas Mureika — Chair & Professor of Physics, Loyola Marymount University
Quantum Gravity & Cosmology

1:30 – 2:00 PM

Graduate Student Panel II: Nuclear, Condensed Matter & Biological Physics
Panelists (UCLA):

- Joshua Lee — Condensed Matter Physics/Ultrafast Science
- Luke Sellers — Nuclear & Theoretical Particle Physics
- Jacob Schagene — Neurophysics/Biophysics

2:00 – 2:30 PM

Gerard Fasel — Associate Professor of Physics, Pepperdine University
Solar–Terrestrial Interactions & Space Physics

2:30 – 3:00 PM

Transfer Student Panel & Closing Remarks

Panelists (UCLA):

- Tessa Temme — Hardware Engineering, Space X
- Sara Saib — Condensed Matter, Physics PhD Student, UCLA