

PEAK PERFORMERS: Physics Honors 2012 Mechanics Scholars

COLLEGE STATION – Twenty-one Texas A&M University students enrolled in Physics 218 (Classical Mechanics) this spring have been honored by the [Department of Physics and Astronomy](#) as its latest [Addison Wesley/Benjamin Cummings Mechanics Scholars](#).

The students, selected for their top-scoring marks on a special end-of-semester "Challenge Exam" open to all Physics 218 students and covering material from all related sections taught during the spring 2012 semester, were honored Thursday (May 3) during an awards banquet in the [George P. and Cynthia Woods Mitchell Institute for Fundamental Physics and Astronomy](#).

The event featured a presentation by [Dr. David Toback](#), professor of physics and astronomy and Thaman Professor for Undergraduate Teaching Excellence, on career possibilities in physics and related fields. Each student was presented with a certificate commemorating their accomplishments by Dr. George R. Welch, professor and head of the department.

This semester's top three performers -- freshman general studies major Matthew Krusleski (first), freshman petroleum engineering major Shangjie Yue (tied for second) and freshman general studies major Steven Skobel (tied for second) – also received copies of the Physics 208 textbook, "Young and Freedman, Volume II," (valued at around \$90) as well as monetary awards (\$200 for first place, \$100 for second and third) to be used toward academics.

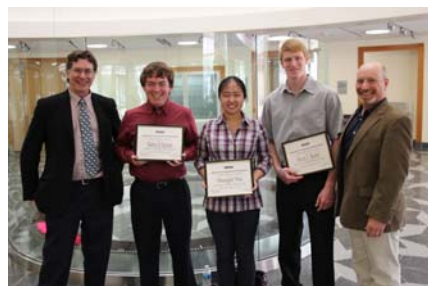
Before handing out awards, Toback informed those in attendance that their performance on the exam indicated that they possess a natural talent for physics and encouraged them to consider pursuing an education in the subject.

"The idea that we are all dorky and weird like on *The Big Bang Theory* is not true," he explained. "There are lots of

HEAD OF THE CLASSES



Spring 2012 Addison Wesley/Benjamin Cummings Mechanics Scholars, flanked by Texas A&M physicists Dr. George Welch (back row, far left) and Dr. David Toback (back row, far right).



(left to right) Dr. George Welch, freshman general studies major Matthew Krusleski (first), freshman petroleum engineering major Shangjie Yue (second-place tie), freshman general studies major Steven Skobel (second-place tie), and Dr. David Toback.

DR. DAVID TOBACK

companies in Texas who are looking for physics majors, and these aren't little mom-and-pop businesses either. These are the real deal."

Although considered one of the department's toughest physics courses, Physics 218 routinely attracts about 800 students across its eight sections each spring semester and about 1,500 in the fall, according to Toback.

The event is part of the Mechanics Scholar Program, founded by the department in 2002 to celebrate the best students in Physics 218 and encourage career exploration in physics.

"You clearly have the right stuff to get further in physics," Toback told the students.

Click [here](#) for more information on the program, including requirements and lists of past winners.

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