

Graduate Student Panel Discussion- Panelist Bios

09.24.25 online TIMESTEP meeting

5:00 - 6:30 pm, Zoom ID: 8261 575 9625

Moderator:



Christa DeCoursey (she/her)

I am a fifth-year graduate student at the University of Arizona studying astronomy/astrophysics. I'm currently applying for postdoctoral fellowships and intend to graduate next July. My research interests focus on high-redshift transients with the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST). More specifically, I'm interested in discovering high-redshift supernovae with JWST and studying how they differ from local supernovae. I'm also involved in coordinating efforts to conduct deep long-term monitoring programs in extragalactic fields with JWST to discover very distant, slowly-evolving transient events. At the start of graduate school, my research focused on radio galaxies but I abruptly switched research topics in my second year when presented with an opportunity to work with JWST data. I've been a TIMESTEP summer internship coordinator for the past four years and am excited to provide advice and guidance to undergrads who are considering applying to graduate school!

Panelists:



Chance Lawrence (he/him)

Chance Lawrence earned his B.S. in Statistics and Data Science and Astronomy from the University of Arizona. During his undergraduate studies, he contributed to the development of ground stations for the CatSat CubeSat project. His undergraduate work emphasized microwave antenna holography, satellite data analysis, and X-band receiver design. Currently, his research focuses on applying GPU-accelerated computer vision techniques to aerial imaging, including optical flow analysis for pilotage systems and the use of the dynamic minimum resolvable temperature (DMRT) metric to model dynamic pilotage performance.

Looking ahead, he is interested in advancing drone detection technologies through the use of gimbal-mounted and wide field-of-view (FoV) long-wave infrared (LWIR) systems.



Charlie Goldberg (he/him)

I am a second year graduate student at the University of California San Diego, and I currently study Europa using JWST! After graduating from UA in 2023 with a double major in Physics and Astronomy and a minor in Planetary Sciences, I did not get into any grad schools during my first application cycle. I then did a gap year at Steward Observatory (doing extragalactic astronomy) before successfully applying for grad school again in the 2023-2024 cycle.



Mika Lambert (she/her)

Hello! My name is Mika Lambert, I am a third-year PhD student at the University of California-Santa Cruz and an NSF GRFP fellow. My research interests primarily involve near-field cosmology and galactic archeology. I'm currently looking at tidally induced spiral arms in the outskirts of the Milky Way. In my free time, I enjoy painting, fiber arts, and rock climbing! As an undergrad at the University of Arizona, I was president of the Astronomy Club and a TIMESTEP Leader. I did research projects with Dennis Zaritsky and Chad Bender in completely different fields but had a blast learning

and developing research skills in both!



Olivia Pitcl (she/her)

Olivia graduated from the University of Arizona in 2023 with a B.S. in Physics and a minor in Computer Science. She spent the following year working in a quantum photonics laboratory in the UA's College of Optical Sciences with Prof. Matt Eichenfield where she did research in integrated photonic circuits, developing key experimental test stations for hosts for quantum emitters. She has recently begun her PhD at Caltech in Applied Physics, where she is currently working with Prof. Oskar Painter, developing a novel type of superconducting qubit towards ultra-long coherence

times, improving its overall efficacy as a promising platform in quantum computing. In her spare time, she has been reading Dune, running, and recently adopted a foster kitten.



Sarah Stamer (she/her)

I am a second-year Ph.D. student in Physics with an Astrophysics Concentration and a New Mexico Space Grant Graduate Research Fellow at the University of New Mexico. I graduated from the University of Arizona with bachelor's degrees in Astronomy (with Honors) and Physics in May 2024, where I was most notably a Stamps Scholar and a 2023 Astronaut Scholar.

During my undergraduate career, I conducted 3.5 years of research (including through REUs and an Arizona/NASA Space Grant Internship) on online astronomy education, combating science misinformation, the links between exoplanet and host star composition, and atmospheric retrievals for Venus-like exoplanets. I was also involved in TIMESTEP for 2 years as a peer leader, worked at Flandrau as a planetarium operator, and served as a College of Science and a Franke Honors College Ambassador.

Currently, I am conducting research analyzing an exoplanet's atmospheric spectrum from JWST (but I will be moving into research that looks at exoplanet and host star composition, exoplanet atmospheres, and exoplanet demographics), am teaching introductory astronomy labs, volunteering as a telescope operator at the campus observatory, and am serving as an officer in the UNM Physics and Astronomy Graduate Student Association and the Women in Physics, Astronomy, and Optics organizations. I enjoy playing percussion, curling (yes, the Olympic sport), reading, and watching sports when not in class or working on research.