

ASTRONOMY



Matt Marvin has big plans for his bachelor's degree in astronomy. He's also working toward a B.S. in secondary education. Together, these degrees will prepare him to teach physics or astronomy in high school. The advantage, he says, is that he'll soon have the credentials to teach an array of scientific subjects at that level.

Students who pursue more than one major always face challenges. Matt knows this. "There is a huge time commitment involved with both my majors," he explains. "And, because they cross disciplines, it's even more demanding. It can be tough switching back and forth between education – where observation and discussion are important – and science, where it's mostly empirical and logic based."

Within astronomy, Matt is particularly interested in the study of black holes, cosmology and the origins of the universe. "I took a special topics course that was all about black holes. Several professors in the department do extensive research in this particular area, so there are a lot of possibilities for getting more involved. I've also taken Stellar Astronomy and Planetary Astronomy with professors who focus on observational astronomy and computational computer-based models."

Another advantage, he points out, includes the connections he can make because faculty in this department have close ties with important

organizations such as NASA, and with many world-renowned specialists in the field. "For example, one professor arranged for the College to host the Stellar Observations Network Group (SONG), which meant that important researchers from China and Europe were on campus. The department also hosted the Active Galactic Nuclei Winds conference. So many specialists in this field were here. It was really an amazing opportunity to sit in on the talks and mingle with these top researchers. Some students actually got paid to work the conference and hang out with guys they probably would not otherwise have the chance to meet."

Next up, Matt will be tackling his senior research project – a requirement for this major. "I hope to focus on some aspect of the black hole phenomenon," he says. "What's cool about the professors in the physics department is that they'll definitely give you a chance to concentrate on an area that you're interested in, and they'll work with you to develop that."

COLLEGE of CHARLESTON

Astronomy majors are taught to examine phenomena beyond the Earth's boundaries and ask critical questions about what they observe. We prepare them to be proficient in astronomy through specific coursework, an expansive menu of research opportunities and hands-on experience using the department's facilities, which include an on-campus observatory and labs, as well as a network of interlinked telescopes in various sites around the world.

Facts

All astronomy majors complete an in-depth research project in their senior year.

Internships are available to many students through the department

Opportunities

Once-a-week departmental colloquia feature talks by prominent scholars.

Faculty and students meet for pizza, refreshments and lively discussions every other Friday.

The Society for Physics Students offers mutual support and social interaction.