Panelists Bios

Maria Weber (Delta State University) - Maria Weber is an assistant professor of physics and director of the Wiley Planetarium at Delta State University in Cleveland, Mississippi. This unique position combining outreach and teaching is what brought her to the Mississippi Delta. Her scholarly interests include solar physics, stellar magnetohydrodynamics, and physics and astronomy education research. Prior to her current appointment, she was an NSF Astronomy and Astrophysics Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Chicago and Adler Planetarium. After catching the 'outreach bug' during her first postdoc at the University of Exeter, the NSF fellowship allowed her to experience astronomy outreach from a new perspective. She graduated from the University of Evansville with a BS in physics and philosophy. After a transformative REU experience in solar physics, she pursued a PhD in physics from Colorado State University while performing research on solar magnetic flux emergence at the High Altitude Observatory/NCAR.

Jeff Oishi (Bates College) - Jeff Oishi is an Associate Professor at Bates College. Jeff received his PhD in 2007 from the University of Virginia. His research group studies fluid dynamics at scales ranging from global models of planets and stars to the swimming and growth of bacteria with theoretical and computational tools. They are particularly interested in “complicated” fluid dynamics: problems involving turbulence, phase changes, traditional “complex” non-Newtonian fluids, or some combination of them all. The group is also focused on providing solid training in computational science, fluid dynamics, and applied mathematics to a diverse group of undergraduate researchers. You can find more information about Jeff’s group and their research on their website.

Amy Furniss (Cal. State East Bay) - Amy Furniss is an Associate Professor at Cal. State East Bay. Amy received her Physics PhD in 2013 from University of California in Santa Cruz. For the past 8 years she has been studying gamma-ray astrophysics, active galactic nuclei, blazar environment, evolution and emission, extragalactic background light, intergalactic magnetic fields, extragalactic cosmic ray and photon propagation, relativistic acceleration mechanisms and non-thermal emission processes. She is currently the Deputy Spokesperson of the VERITAS Collaboration, keeping involved in her research through the work of her undergraduate students and her adjunct faculty position at UC Santa Cruz. In addition to teaching physics and astronomy courses, Amy is working on an engaging digital format textbook on introductory physics, works to help CSU physics, astronomy and computer science students succeed in their pursuits of getting their PhD, and is dedicated to increasing student awareness of Impostor Syndrome within the physics and astronomy fields.

Kassahun Betre (San Jose State University) - Kassa is assistant professor of physics at San Jose State University. He graduated with his PhD in High Energy Theory from Stanford in 2014. He then became a teaching fellow in the Thinking Matters program at Stanford for three years where he co-taught various courses in the Introductory Studies program. After that, he started assistant professor position at Pepperdine University in Malibu, CA. In 2020 he moved back to the Bay Area to start his current position at San Jose State University.