

## Honors Day 2014

The annual Physics Honors Day celebration on April 28 gave the department the chance to honor a distinguished alumnus, recognize outstanding students, applaud the teaching of a selected faculty member, and hear about launching a school bus into outer space.

Professor and Head Hanno Weitering opened the ceremony, where he shared that for the 2013-2014 Academic Year, the department will have 37 new alumni; including 11 bachelor's, 5 master's, and 21 PhDs. He also recognized the eight **Chancellor's Honors recipients** (<http://web.utk.edu/~provwww/honorsbanquet/2014/>) from the department, who were honored at a banquet on April 23. (The physics department claimed nearly 19 percent of the Arts and Sciences winners for Extraordinary Professional Promise.) Those honorees were:

### For Extraordinary Professional Promise:

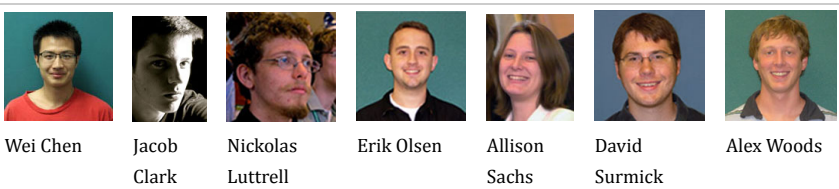
- Wei Chen
- Erik Olsen
- Allison Sachs
- Zachary Sims
- David Surmick
- Alex Woods

### For Extraordinary Academic Achievement:

- Nickolas Luttrell

### For Extraordinary Campus Leadership and Service:

- Jacob Clark



## 2014 Distinguished Alumni Award Honoree

Department Head Hanno Weitering (left) presents Warren Keller with the 2014 Distinguished Alumni Award.

Next the department honored physics graduate Warren Keller with the 2014 Distinguished Alumni Award. He gave the Honors Day talk, explaining that his impressive three decades-long career with NASA actually came without too much planning on his part. When he was still enrolled in Knoxville High School, his older brother Fred was studying engineering physics at UT. So when it came Warren's time to go to college, he took the same path.

"There was no plan," he said. "I just plain copied my brother."

He earned a bachelor's degree in engineering physics in 1953 and afterward spent two years in the Army before returning to UT to earn a master's degree in physics in 1957.



From there he moved to Texas and spent three years working for Convair (part of General Dynamics Corporation). He then began his illustrious tenure with NASA, which started in 1960 at the Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville as head of the Nuclear Physics Section in the Research Projects Division.

In 1962 he moved to NASA headquarters in Washington, D.C., where for the next two decades he held a number of key positions. He was the program manager for the Outer Planets Grand Tour and Voyager Programs, and later for the Hubble Space Telescope Program, making him program manager for NASA's two most important unmanned space science missions. His efforts were instrumental in gaining Agency and Congressional approval for both. He punctuated

his talk with anecdotes about the programs: of the Hubble, he said, "it was like putting a school bus in orbit."

Keller also played the leading role in establishing the Space Telescope Science Institute, still in place at Johns Hopkins University. His expertise was often requested to help troubleshoot scientific flight programs such as the Galileo Project. In 1981, he was named director of the Suborbital Projects and Operations Directorate of the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, and as such became director of NASA's 1,100-person Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia. He served at Wallops until he retired from NASA in 1989. By that time, Warren Keller had been program manager for objects that have been flying in space, collectively, for 100 years and are still going.

During his tenure at NASA he was honored with several awards, including the NASA Medal for Outstanding Leadership and the Presidential Rank of Meritorious Executive in the Senior Executive Service. The department chose to honor him as our 2014 Distinguished Alumnus "for his leadership and personal contributions to space science at NASA through his service as Program Manager for the Voyager and Hubble Space Telescope Programs and for three decades of dedicated service to the total NASA program."

### **The Honors Day 2014 Photo Album**

**(<http://www.phys.utk.edu/events/2014-honors-day/index.html>)**

is also online. And if you couldn't make it to the event, the ceremony is available on **video**

**(<http://sf.ites.utk.edu/utk/Play/3fd15a2e99e348db91e5f116732610e0catalog=d2def3df-e13c-45ef-999b-e0a5ed6adebf>)** as part of the

department's colloquium series. You can also find out about **the names behind our awards**

**(<http://www.phys.utk.edu/honors.html>)**

## Student and Faculty Awards

Mark Alexander Kaltenborn accepts the Robert Talley Award for Undergraduate Research from Dr. Kate Jones.

After the talk, the department presented student awards and the SPS Teacher of the Year award. The honorees were:

### Undergraduate Awards

- Outstanding First Year Physics Student: **Louis Varriano**

- Robert Talley Award for Outstanding Undergraduate Research: **Mark Alexander Kaltenborn**
- Robert Talley Award for Outstanding Undergraduate Leadership: **Richard Prince**
- James W. McConnell Award for Academic Excellence: **Cody Wiggins**
- Douglas V. Roseberry Award: **Gregory Lyon**



The department also had four students who earned membership to Sigma Pi Sigma; the National Physics Honor Society:

- **Andrew Belt**
- **John Burnum**
- **Kennon Carlisle**
- **Gregory Lyon**

#### Laboratory/Service Awards

- Robert W. Lide Citations: **Bo Daugherty and Jacob Wessels**
- Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant Award: **Kayla Craycraft and Santiago Munoz**
- Outstanding Physics Tutor Award: **Kaleb McClure**

Dr. Jim Parks presents Bo Daugherty with Robert Lide Citation for his contributions to the astronomy laboratories.



#### Graduate Awards

- Colloquium Award: **Robert Van Wesep**
- Paul Stelson Fellowship for Beginning Research: **Zhiling Dun**
- Paul Stelson Fellowship for Professional Promise: **Phil Griffin**
- Fowler-Marion Outstanding Graduate Student Award: **Kubra Yeter**

Wayne Kincaid Award: **Bo Daugherty**

Society of Physics Students Teacher of the Year Award: **Tony Mezzacappa**



SPS President Richard Prince (left) presents the 2014 Teacher of the Year Award to Dr. Tony Mezzacappa.