

Academic-adjacent careers in astronomy and physics

April 5, 2023 / 5:00 - 6:30 pm

Zoom link: <https://arizona.zoom.us/j/82615759625>

Panelist Bios



Alex Stoken is a data scientist in the Earth Science and Remote Sensing Unit (ESRS) at NASA Johnson Space Center (JSC) for Jacobs through the JETS II contract. After graduating from UArizona Physics and Math in 2019, he joined ESRS to work on computer vision and other machine learning projects with astronaut photography. Since, he has contributed to other AI/ML projects at JSC as well as Artemis 1 mission operations. He completed a thesis-based Masters in Computer Science from the University of Texas at Austin while continuing to work at ESRS.



Rachel Smullen is a staff scientist at Los Alamos National Laboratory and is deputy director of the Center for Theoretical Astrophysics at LANL. Her interests broadly lie in finding new ways to extract more information from simulations to help understand the physics at play. Rachel graduated from University of Wyoming with degrees in physics and astronomy in 2014 before starting graduate school at the University of Arizona's Steward Observatory. There, she realized that staying up all night at the telescope was not her favorite way to do research, so she transitioned to working on computational star and planet formation with Kaitlin Kratter. She defended her dissertation in June 2020 before moving to Los Alamos as a Nicholas C. Metropolis Postdoctoral Fellow. She liked LANL so much that she decided to make a career of it, although that meant dropping most of the "astro" out of her physics research. Since the start of Covid, Rachel has been on a quest to cook or bake one new recipe a week.



Kayli Glidic graduated from the University of Arizona in May 2022 with majors in Astronomy and Physics and a minor in Planetary Science. While she was an undergrad and for a short time after graduating, Kayli worked on the NIRCam team at Steward Observatory. Now, she works at the Space Telescope Science Institute (STScI) in the Instruments Division, specifically working with the NIRSpec team, as a Science Support Associate Analyst.



Tyler Baines is a Science Support Analyst at the Space Telescope Science Institute (STScI) as a member of the JWST NIRISS instrument team as of late 2022. My role consists of performing technical analysis for calibration studies for the Single Object Slitless Spectrograph (SOSS) observation mode. Prior to joining STScI, I was a Science Researcher for 3 years at NASA Goddard Space Flight where I was a part of the Exoplanet Spectroscopy Technology team developing simulations for directly imaging exoEarths for future mission concepts, like LUVOR. I graduated from the University of Arizona in 2018. My interest consists of Exoplanets and Instrumentation. A long-term career goal of mine is to contribute to the future development of the next generation Habitable Worlds Observatory that will directly image potentially habitable worlds. As a member at STScI I am working towards fulfilling this goal.



Christine O'Donnell (she/her) is an Education & Diversity Program Manager at the American Physical Society (APS) where she currently works on Effective Practices for Physics Programs Initiative (EP3) and the Physics Teacher Education Coalition (PhysTEC). Christine is passionate about transforming physics and STEM education to be more equitable and inclusive. Prior to joining APS, she developed and researched culturally responsive and relevant curricula for both high school and college classrooms, and she facilitated professional development with K-12 teachers on these topics. She received a PhD in 2020 from the University of Arizona where she completed a dissertation that included work on inclusive general-education astronomy course design, as well as combining observational and theoretical data on galaxy formation to understand the relationship between dark matter accretion and star formation.