

NATIONAL FIRST PRIZE

McGill University



(L-R) Louise Decelles and Diane Koziol.

Homer's Physics Seminar Series

Homer's Physics is a seminar series geared for non-researchers within McGill's Physics Department. This 'in-reach' program is designed to inform the department's technical, clerical and managerial staff what the researchers are working on and how their support has benefited this research. On a monthly basis, researchers present their work in language that 'Homer Simpson' would understand - hence the name.

The issue of integrating new professors within the department led to the inception of the series. Newer staff is often unaware of the resources available when arriving in an institution. An informal method to introduce them to the support staff was to hold research seminars in which researchers present their work and support staff become aware of the research being done, which enables them to offer better assistance. This original team-building exercise also allowed for significant productivity benefits. Being informed on the department's activities, better purchasing decisions are made, thus benefiting from economies of scale.

The seminars are informal so as to be inclusive and less intimidating to non-academic staff. A departmental listserv is used to invite staff and researchers, although no formal follow-up has been set-up to encourage informal exchanges. A web site (www.physics.mcgill.ca/seminars/homer) provides access to all the presentations.

The expected outcome of establishing closer ties between academic and support staff has been achieved. Researchers are able to share with the support staff the fire that drives their work and demonstrate how administrative support has directly benefited their research. The support staff is acknowledged for their daily contributions to the entire department, while they are introduced to physics in an intimidation-free format.

These seminars have resulted in a higher level of understanding, respect, appreciation, and team-building within the department. They have also contributed to cost savings on equipment, tools, and chemicals purchases.

For further information on this project, please contact:

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Looking back on the last 20 years

Number of universities having been selected at least once for an award: 43

Number of awards given: 162

Only university having made a submission in each year of the program:
University of Toronto

National consortia having received awards:
Canadian University Reciprocal Insurance Exchange (1987)
Canadian National Site Licensing Project (2001)

Regional consortia recognized:
Interuniversity Services Inc. (1988)
Maritime Universities System (Integration Consortium) (1994)
Shared Hierarchical Academic Research Computing Network (2003)
Ontario Facility Condition Assessment Program (2003)

1987 - 2007
Celebrating 20 years | Le programme fête ses 20 ans

