

Excellence, Times Two

Physics professor honored for both scholarship and advocacy

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CHANDA PRESCOD-WEINSTEIN

Chanda Prescod-Weinstein, assistant professor of physics and core faculty in women's and gender studies at UNH, has received the American Physical Society's (APS) [Edward A. Bouchet Award](#). The award recognizes a distinguished minority physicist who has made significant contributions to physics research and the advancement of underrepresented minority scientists.

[Prescod-Weinstein](#) was honored for “contributions to theoretical cosmology and particle physics, ranging from axion physics to models of inflation to alternative models of dark energy, for tireless efforts in increasing inclusivity in physics, and for co-creating the Particles for Justice movement,” according to the award citation.

A theoretical cosmologist, Prescod-Weinstein studies dark matter, work that’s at the intersection of physics and astronomy. She’s also active in research in Black feminist science, technology and society studies. Her book, [The Disordered Cosmos: A Journey into Dark Matter, Spacetime, and Dreams Deferred](#), will be published in March 2021.

Prescod-Weinstein works to advance underrepresented minority scientists by serving on several professional committees and through her [extensive writing and commentary](#) on science and social justice for mainstream media outlets and on Twitter, where she has nearly 80,000 followers. She co-founded [Particles for Justice](#) in 2018 to fight systemic sexism in academia. On June 10, 2020, that organization mounted a #strike4blacklives response to systemic racism and violence against Black people in conjunction with the #shutdownSTEM and #shutdownacademia initiatives that day.

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“It is an honor to be recognized for making significant contributions to physics despite barriers while simultaneously making significant contributions to breaking those barriers down. Underrepresented minorities are often encouraged to keep their heads down in order to succeed and not serve their communities, and people often interpret service as a lack of passion for science when it is usually the opposite,” says Prescod-Weinstein. “I’m really grateful to the people who have supported me in continuing to do both, recognizing that both efforts are needed in order to make physics the professional space it should be.”

“It was especially thrilling to get this news since last year’s winner was Nadya Mason, one of my mentors. She and I are the only Black women to receive this award, which has been around since 1994,” she adds. Mason is a professor of physics at the University of Illinois.

“Dr. Prescod-Weinstein is a brilliant scholar, an exceptionally talented teacher and a most dedicated citizen of the UNH community. She fosters a vibrant academic atmosphere by sharing her enthusiasm for teaching, mentoring and fundamental research in theoretical astroparticle physics, cosmology and science, technology and society studies with students of all levels,” says Karsten Pohl, professor of physics and chair of the [physics department](#). “The physics department is proud to have attracted such a strong voice supporting Black scientists and other underrepresented minority groups in physics and raising awareness to their specific challenges in our field.”

“I was thrilled to hear of the recognition given to professor Prescod-Weinstein,” says Chuck Zercher, dean of the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences. “She is an outstanding scientist with an unwavering commitment to the development of an inclusive scientific culture.”

The award consists of a stipend of \$5,000 plus support for travel to an APS meeting where Prescod-Weinstein will give a presentation. In addition, she will give up to three additional talks at academic institutions where the impact of the visit on minority students would be significant.

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