

2025 CANADIAN CONFERENCE FOR UNDERGRADUATE WOMEN AND GENDER MINORITIES IN PHYSICS

SUMMARY: The Canadian Conference for Undergraduate Women and Gender Minorities in Physics (CCUW*iP) is a three-day series conference for undergraduate physics, astronomy, and engineering students from across Canada. This edition of the event was the first to include ‘Gender Minorities’ in the official title, showcasing the Canadian Association of Physicists’ (CAP) commitment to inclusivity. This report serves to outline key aspects and results of CCUW*iP, encouraging future editions and similar events of its kind.



By **MICHAELA GILKS**^{1,2} <michaela.gilks@ucalgary.ca>

¹Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, T2N 1N4, Canada

²Department of Philosophy, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, T2N 1N4, Canada

The 12th edition of the Canadian Conference for Undergraduate Women and Gender Minorities in Physics (CCUW*iP) was held at the University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, from January 31st to February 2nd, 2025 [1]. Over 3 days, 92 students from 20 universities across Canada came together, attending social and academic events to build connections for their academic and professional development. These student-run events demonstrate the tenets of leadership and the importance of fostering welcoming environments in Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines, where women and gender minorities are often underrepresented.

The CCUW*iP aims to support women and LGBTQIA+ students in physics by creating networking platforms, highlighting diverse research, and addressing challenges specific to underrepresented groups in STEM [2]. This event is sister to the American Physical Society’s (APS) Conferences for Undergraduate Women and Gender Minorities in Physics (CU*iP) concurrently hosted at universities across the United States [3].

As a rotating event hosted by a different institution across Canada each year, the CCUW*iP enables undergraduate students to visit institutions across the country and provides an opportunity for them to host the event themselves. This annual congress offers an occasion for these students to:

- Present their research in poster and oral presentation competitions
- Attend plenary lectures and panel discussions
- Participate in workshops
- Visit laboratory and observatory facilities
- Network at a graduate and career fair
- Participate in social networking events
- Access mentorship from established scientists in their fields

This event provides important peer and professional support systems that are often difficult to access as a minority in traditional academic settings, creating visibility and substantial resources for undergraduate students' academic and professional advancements. The 12th edition of CCUW*IP featured a variety of events, including plenary lectures, roundtable panel discussions, workshops, tours to local laboratories and the Rothney Astrophysical Observatory (RAO), a graduate and career fair, and networking/social events. For specific information, please refer to the event programme [1].

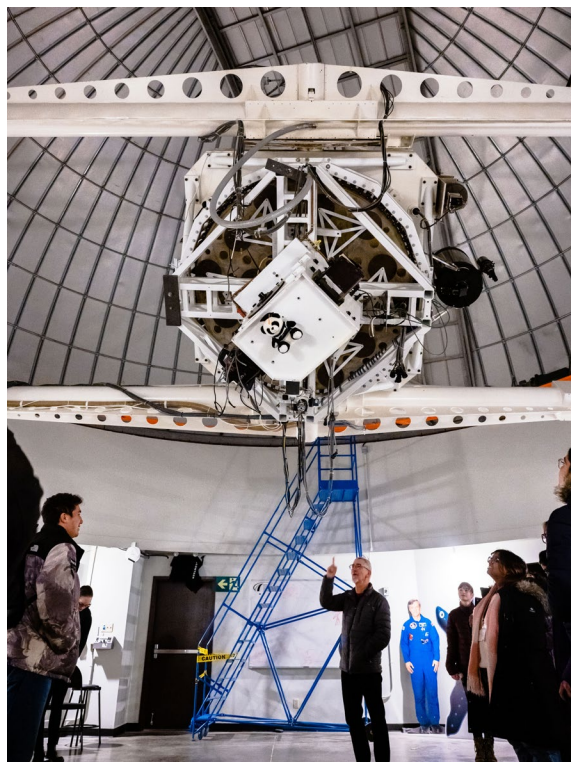


Figure 1. Dr. Phil Langill speaking to delegates at the tour of the Rothney Astrophysical Observatory.



Figure 2. Delegates Michaela Hishon (left) and Emma Greenall (right).

2025 CCUW*iP AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

With over 215 participants (consisting of attendees, committee members, volunteers, tour guides, speakers, panellists, judges, and representatives from visiting institutions), CCUW*iP 2025 provided a transformative environment for networking, mentorship, and professional academic development. This scale was made possible by the remarkable capacity for community support beyond the institutional level. Local businesses offered significant discounts and product donations, and graduate students, postdocs, staff and faculty members contributed in ways beyond their commitments out of support for the cause.

The 92 student delegates paid a registration fee of \$60, which (with contributions from generous sponsors) covered hotel accommodation, meals, snacks, and refreshments throughout the event, removing common barriers for event attendance. Attendees also received a customized tote bag filled with an assembly of items such as notebooks, pens, merchandise, and local transportation passes. Visiting participants were asked to return any unused transit tickets at the end of the event, which were subsequently donated to the local Women's Emergency Shelter, extending the event's values beyond immediate participants.

When registering for the CCUW*iP, students were encouraged to submit an abstract to compete in oral and poster presentation competitions at an undergraduate level. These presentations were made

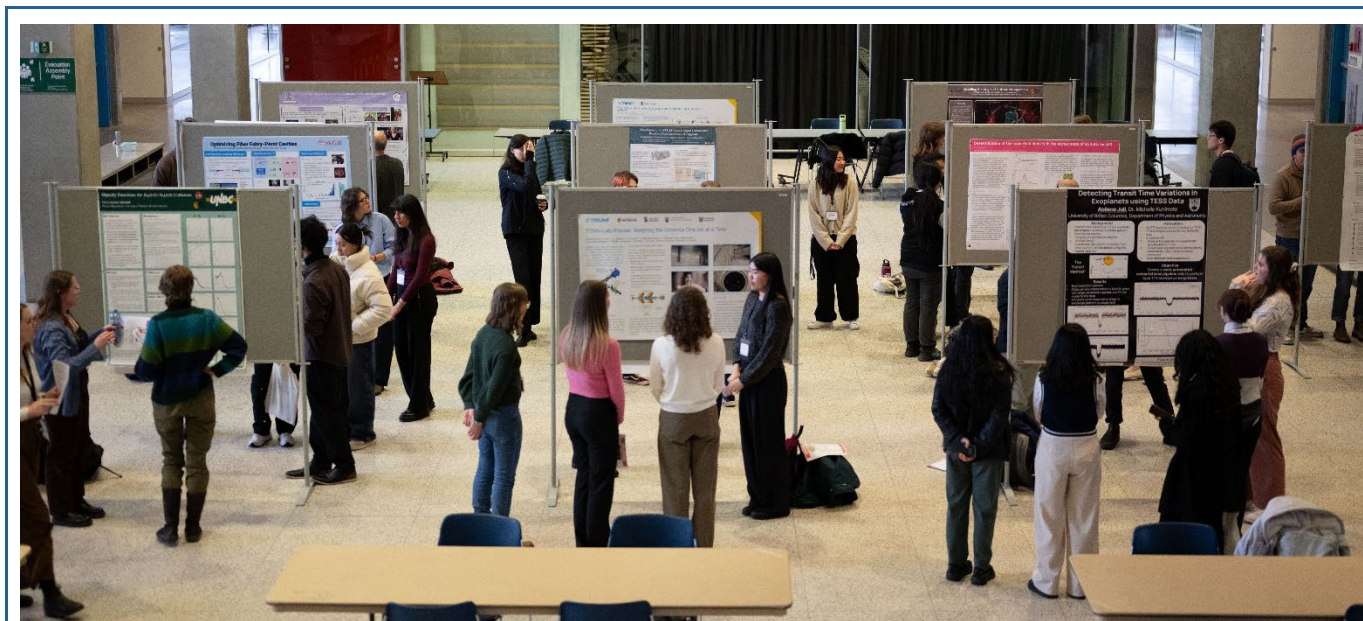


Figure 3: A snapshot from the student poster presentation competition hosted on Saturday, February 1st, 2025.

to an audience of undergraduate students and a panel of judges on the second day of the event. Award recipients were announced and celebrated at the banquet dinner. A total of 42 students presented at the event. Also, upon registration, students were prompted to note their preferences for workshop, lab tour, and parallel panel sessions. Beyond academic structured events, the graduate and career fair was a huge success with 22 institutions, industry, and organizations hosting tables at the event—allowing for substantial networking and inquiries about careers and future studies.

The organizing committee implemented comprehensive accessibility accommodations throughout the duration of the event. This included quiet rooms for sensory needs and study spaces, volunteer escorts on and off campus for participant safety, and access to emergency campus contact information. The organizing committee also worked to offer a well-rounded and accessible food experience for everyone. To achieve this, lunches were, by default, halal and gluten-free, with selections between chicken and vegan options. These efforts received incredible positive feedback from participants, demonstrating the significance and impact that food accessibility can have for conference experiences.

For the organizers, the most meaningful impact came from witnessing participant testimonies. After both the banquet and closing ceremony, delegates expressed their gratitude and favourite components of the event, sharing how different talks and panels resonated with them, as well as the opportunities and insights they took away from the experience. This feedback made months of planning worthwhile, highlighting the genuine connections and learning opportunities that were facilitated for everyone involved. A selected number of pictures from the 2025 CCUW*IP are depicted in Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4.

CONFERENCE LEADERSHIP

A team of 9 organizing committee members from three universities (the University of Calgary, the University of Alberta, and the University of Lethbridge) orchestrated CCUW*iP 2025. Together, the team secured 45 sponsorships, organized a comprehensive programme for social and academic events, and coordinated 20+ volunteers who dedicated their time during the three-day event.

The CCUW*iP enables considerable administrative and leadership development opportunities for organizers. Managing these logistics fostered skills in coordinating well-structured events/schedules, time management, communication, and overseeing a large team to accomplish collective goals. This experience highlighted the importance of catering to complex stakeholder relationships and attendee needs while navigating a schedule with significant moving parts. Involved leadership experiences like CCUW*iP are valuable experiences at the undergraduate level, allowing students to develop professional skills in the contexts of organization, community building, and scientific events management.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Conferences like the CCUW*iP are critical for highlighting the accomplishments of gender minorities in traditionally male-dominated fields and promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) values in STEM settings. These events function as platforms for marginalized groups, offering environments where participants feel welcome and supported, surrounded by like-minded individuals and allies, celebrating diverse experiences and contributions to STEM.

The 13th edition of CCUW*iP will be held in Vancouver at the University of British Columbia in January 2026. Expressions of interest in hosting the 2027 edition should be submitted to CAP by January 15, 2026, with full bid applications due on February 15, 2026. Links and further information about the application process can be found at [2].



Figure 4: All delegates and organizing committee members present at the closing ceremony on Sunday, February 2nd, 2025.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All photos in this document are credited to Nick Kuzmin.

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to all attendees, speakers, visiting institutions, sponsors, donors, and volunteers who contributed to CCUW*IP 2025. Their dedication and support made this event possible. In particular, we thank the Department of Physics and Astronomy and the Faculty of Science at the University of Calgary for all their support. We would also like to thank CAP for this incredible event-hosting opportunity.

REFERENCES

1. <https://ccuwip.cap.ca/about/past-locations/2025-ucalgary/programme-2025>
2. <https://cap.ca/congress-conference/ccuwip>
3. <https://www.aps.org/initiatives/inclusion/gender-inclusive/undergraduate-women-minorities>