How College Students use a Merry-go-Round

By: Paul Kato

Over the past summer, the Physics department installed a merry-go-round behind Hurst Hall to teach concepts pertaining to rotation. This merry-go-round for physics purposes has no governor, meaning it’s frictionless. This is crucial in correctly showing how the physics concepts work.

With the help of the merry-go-round, physics professors will portray angular velocity, torque, rational inertia, and Coriolls force, among others, while working outside of the classroom.

“I didn’t understand [Coriolls force] until I was standing on it,” said Dr. John Mason, “You step on it and ‘Oh now I get it!’” Dr. Mason, Assistant Professor of Physics, was a third year graduate student at The University of California, Santa Cruz when it finally hit him.

“As a piece of lab equipment, the merry-go-round will last twenty-five years” said Dr. Mason. After being installed this past summer, the merry-go-round will be used for multiple classes: Physics 110, 120, 140, 330 and Science 110. Dr. Mason hopes to provide students with the option to get outside of the classroom and have fun, but at the same time have a serious lab.