



American  
Physical  
Society

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**Kate P. Kirby**  
*Chief Executive Officer*

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Shane Hutson  
Chair, Department of Physics & Astronomy  
6301 Stevenson Science Center  
Vanderbilt University  
Nashville, TN 37212

Dear Dr. Hutson,

I'd like to bring to your attention the wonderful work that three Vanderbilt University Physics & Astronomy Department students — senior XJ Xu and graduate students Savanna Starko and Brooks Musangu — have done for the physics community.

The American Physical Society is the nation's leading research organization for physicists. APS has had a focused advocacy initiative concerning the PROSPER Act, a bill drafted by the U.S. House of Representatives to update the Higher Education Act. This bill would be detrimental for undergraduate and graduate students by introducing a new loan structure that would increase student loan debt.

XJ, Savanna, and Brooks worked with the APS Office of Government Affairs (OGA) as part of a multi-pronged approach to ask the Senate to not include this loan structure in its version of the bill. They delivered an APS-coordinated petition that received more than 1,200 signatures from students and the science community to Senator Lamar Alexander's Nashville office — Senator Alexander chairs the committee that will write the Senate bill. That meeting with a staff member in the Senator's office importantly revealed that they were sympathetic to and supportive of our position. A similar effort occurred in Seattle, Washington, since Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) is the ranking member of that bill-writing committee.

For performing such an important service to the physics community, I wanted to personally recognize their efforts. Advocacy like this is more important than ever before and I commend XJ, Savanna, and Brooks for their efforts and service for helping to work for the betterment of the physics community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate P. Kirby". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

**Kate P. Kirby**  
*Chief Executive Officer*  
American Physical Society

Cc: XJ Xu  
Cc: Savanna Starko  
Cc: Brooks Musangu