

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Oct. 17, 2019

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UofSC holds physics learning day for local students

The University of South Carolina held R.L. Childers Midway Physics Day at the South Carolina State Fair to help high school students understand more about physics and assist graduate students in learning to teach on Oct. 15.

“I tell our graduate students, ‘Can you explain that to someone with no physics knowledge? Go.’ And at first, they can’t,” Tedeschi said. “It’s not because they’re unable, but they’ve never been trained for that.”

The day-long event brought together UofSC faculty, graduate students and 2,800 high school students from more than 60 high schools across the state.

“Sometimes people think physics is complicated or boring, but in fact it’s exciting and interesting,” physics and astronomy professor Dave Tedeschi said. “And this gives us a megaphone for the day and allows us to give back to the community and talk about science. I love the fair. And this is a wonderful marriage of being in that atmosphere and combining it with teaching.

This was the 23rd year of the event where students worked under a tent to capture data with their cell phones and learned to conduct experiments on a field instead of in a controlled lab. Some experiments were even performed on rides such as the Mega Drop or the Bullet Train roller coaster.

“This is the out-of-the-classroom training that the university wants to formalize in many ways. Science is not always perfect like in a textbook; in fact, it usually isn’t,” said professor and department chair of physics and astronomy Ralf Gothe. “This is a first taste of fieldwork for many high school students. But it should be fun. They should have curly fries and rides to go with the hard work.”

The University of South Carolina (UofSC) was established in 1801 and is a full-service, state-supported research university that includes the Columbia campus and seven regional campuses with a total full-time student body population of more than 46,000 and 2,100 full-time faculty members. UofSC offers a broad spectrum of educational opportunities with 14 colleges and schools that encompass 324 undergraduate and graduate degree-granting programs.

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