Heartland Jesuit Physics Retreat

presented by Michael Cherney for the Creighton Physics Department

History

In 2003, Dr. Ruth Howes of Marquette University suggested a joint meeting of the Physics Departments from Marquette, Loyola of Chicago and Creighton to discuss teaching issues. Dr. Robert Kennedy, who was then chair of the Creighton Physics Department, suggested that Jesuit Mission be part of the discussion. The first joint meeting of faculty from the three departments took place at a central location for the three institutions, Camp Wyoming, in Wyoming, Iowa. Fr. Larry Gillick served as the facilitator for this meeting. This developed into annual meetings which normally are held in the Dubuque area. Past facilitators include Fr. Gregory Carlson, Fr. Michael Morrison and Br. Guy Consolmagno from the Vatican Observatory.

Structure

The retreat begins on a Friday evening with most participants having driven to the meeting following their last class. A social hour is typically followed by a brief session. Saturday normally begins with Mass or a prayer service for those who wish to attend. The morning meeting tends to have the attributes of a workshop meeting of physics teachers that one might encounter at a national or regional conference. The afternoon session generally focuses on how we can work together to create the best experience for our students.

Sharing Resources Via The Internet

This year the retreat had its first web participant. From its inception the group has sought to share seminars with remote classrooms at the collaborating institutions. In 2013 the participants committed to submit an application for an external grant to support the development of cross-institutional upper division online courses at the universities involved. This would bring new expertise and specialized courses that offer a distinctive reflective pedagogy in the Ignatian tradition.

Building Bridges Between Jesuit Institutions

Each year the Creighton Physics Department organizes a retreat for roughly 20 faculty members from the Physics Departments at the Jesuit universities in the region. Representatives from Marquette University, St. Louis University, Loyola University of Chicago, Rockhurst University and Creighton University attended in 2013. Faculty from Regis has committed to attend in 2014.