

UCSD physicist Kim Griest receives Outstanding Junior Investigator Award

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Media Contact: Janet Howard, 534-7572

UCSD PHYSICIST RECEIVES OUTSTANDING JUNIOR INVESTIGATOR AWARD

Kim Griest, an assistant professor of physics at the University of California, San Diego has received an Outstanding Junior Investigator Award from the U.S. Department of Energy. Griest was honored for his significant contributions to the field of high energy physics.

Griest was one of seven scientists from across the country to receive the award this year. The awards give junior faculty members direct control over research funds to accommodate their specific needs and to increase their independence in formulating and pursuing their own research goals.

Griest's research focuses on the search for dark matter -the unknown material believed to make up 90 to 95 percent of matter in the universe. His work indicated that supersymmetric particles make one of the best dark matter candidates and calculated how they might be detected.

Supersymmetric particles are hypothetical elementary particles that are believed to exist as sort of mirror images to known particles. According to the theory, for example, a "selection" would exist as a partner to an electron and a "squark" as a counterpart to a quark.

In addition to continuing to work on methods for detecting these elusive particles, Griest also is searching for more conventional forms of dark matter such as brown dwarf stars. Also called massive compact halo objects, or MACHOS, brown dwarfs are very faint objects that are too small to burn hydrogen.

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