



**AUBURN**  
**SCIENCES AND MATHEMATICS**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Auburn University hosts viewing event for rare solar eclipse**

AUBURN, Ala. — The Auburn University Department of Physics held a solar eclipse viewing event on Monday, April 8, 2024. The department hosted three separate viewing locations across campus on Samford Lawn, Cater Lawn and the campus green space.

A rare solar eclipse occurred on April 8, with much of North America observing a partial eclipse and a narrow 70-mile path witnessing a total eclipse. In Auburn, Alabama, the eclipse took place from noon to 4 p.m. CT, providing viewers with an 83% partial eclipse. The peak of partiality was reached at 2 p.m. in Auburn.

These locations distributed eclipse glasses that made it safe for viewers to experience the eclipse without damaging their eyes. In addition, the department provided telescope viewing stations at all three locations to enhance the experience.

Hundreds of individuals consisting of students, faculty and Auburn residents gathered across campus to experience the 2024 solar eclipse. In fact, so many individuals gathered that the program ran out of glasses to hand out.

“That is a really great problem to have in some sense; we are really excited that this many people showed up,” said physics lecturer Melissa Halford. Despite the shortage of glasses, the event united the community and provided an opportunity for strangers to share together.

Across campus, individuals gathered together, sharing glasses and buying into the experience. The community of people consisted of professors who brought their classes outside, restaurant workers and families who all decided to take a moment and experience the eclipse. This event brought dozens of students together to create lasting memories together on Auburn’s campus.

The eclipse not only cultivated a community on Auburn's campus, but also provided a platform to educate viewers on science. Auburn University Associate Research Professor Mark Adrian said, "Whether it's astronomy, chemistry or biology, all of these fields play a role when an eclipse occurs." Adrian adds, "Night birds come out, night insects come out. The environment changes, and it has a lot of implications across many fields of science." This eclipse viewing collaboratively brought community and education together to create an unforgettable experience for all involved.

A solar eclipse has not reached Auburn since 2017, and the next will not occur for another 20 years. The Auburn community was eager to experience this rare eclipse to the fullest.

This rare eclipse presented an opportunity for the university to highlight the expertise of its professors and the active participation of the community. It underscored the significance of continuous scientific education and engagement, emphasizing the vital link between hands-on experience and academic learning within the Auburn community.

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Auburn University is a nationally ranked land grant institution recognized for its commitment to world-class scholarship, interdisciplinary research with an elite, top-tier Carnegie R1 classification, life-changing outreach with Carnegie's Community Engagement designation and an undergraduate education experience second to none. Auburn is home to more than 30,000 students, and its faculty and research partners collaborate to develop and deliver meaningful scholarship, science and technology-based advancements that meet pressing regional, national and global needs. Auburn's commitment to active student engagement, professional success and public/private partnership drives a growing reputation for outreach and extension that delivers broad economic, health and societal impact.

## Backgrounder



### AUBURN SCIENCES AND MATHEMATICS

Auburn University, located in Auburn, Alabama, is a renowned public research institution known for its rich history, academic excellence, and vibrant campus life. Founded in 1856, Auburn is one of the oldest universities in the South and has evolved into a leading center for education, research and innovation.

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The Auburn University School of Sciences and Mathematics is a distinguished institution dedicated to advancing scholarship and exploration in the domains of science and mathematics. Through a steadfast commitment to scholarly inquiry and interdisciplinary collaboration, the school offers a comprehensive range of programs encompassing biology sciences, chemistry and biochemistry, geosciences, mathematics and statistics as well as physics. Renowned for their expertise, faculty members provide mentorship and guidance to students, fostering a culture of intellectual curiosity and academic excellence. Through immersive laboratory experiences, field research endeavors and scholarly pursuits, students acquire the knowledge and skills to address complex scientific and mathematical challenges. As an integral component of Auburn University's academic framework, the College of Sciences and Mathematics remains steadfast in its mission to cultivate scholarly excellence and nurture intellectual leaders.

With over 30,000 students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs, Auburn offers a wide range of disciplines and degree options, including agriculture, architecture, business, education, engineering, forestry, environmental studies, graduate studies, honors, human sciences, liberal arts, nursing, pharmacy, sciences and mathematics, and veterinary medicine. The university's iconic campus spans over 1,800 acres and features state-of-the-art facilities. Committed to student success, Auburn provides numerous opportunities for hands-on

learning, research and community engagement, preparing graduates to excel in their chosen fields and make meaningful contributions to society.

## Biography Page



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### **Mark L. Adrian**

#### **Associate Research Professor, College of Sciences and Mathematics, Auburn University**

Mark Adrian is a professor at Auburn University for the Department of Physics. His research area covers heliophysics and space plasma physics. Adrian received his bachelor's degree and master's degree in physics at the University of Iowa and his doctorate in Physics at the University of Alabama in Huntsville. Since receiving his degree, Adrian has worked as a research associate, astrophysicist, heliophysics scientist and laboratory physicist all before becoming a professor at Auburn University.

Adrian has broad, expansive experience in the development of research, student mentoring and teaching, both from scientific research and scientific development management. He continues research in the fields of geophysical, space - based and planetary plasma systems as well as the development of hardware and techniques to study these environments. Adrian combines a passion for continuing his research and mentoring students through his job at Auburn University.

### **Melissa Halford**

#### **Lecturer, College of Sciences and Mathematics, Auburn University**

Melissa Halford is a lecturer at Auburn university for the Department of Physics. She earned her bachelor's degree in astronomy at Cornell University before acquiring her doctorate at the University of Arizona. Halford always knew she wanted to pursue a career in astronomy. She has been tutoring since middle school, and she uses her passion for science to teach physics and astronomy to her students in the classroom.

### **Dennis Bodewits**

#### **Associate Professor, College of Sciences and Mathematics, Auburn University**

Dennis Bodewits is an associate professor for the Department of Physics. He earned his master's of science in experimental physics and astrophysics at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands before earning his doctorate in laboratory astrophysics at the Nuclear Accelerator Institute of the University of Groningen in the Netherlands. He has work experience for several positions at NASA, as an assistant research scientist, postdoctoral scientist and now as an associate professor at Auburn University.

Bodewits' research covers the activity and evolution of comets and asteroids. He studies what processes affect the gas surrounding comets, how they exist in our solar system and how they evolve. Besides his research, he has various publications and is a part of many

scientific societies and unions. Bodewits now continues his research and teaching at Auburn University as Auburn University's endowed alumni professor.

## Blog Post



**AUBURN**  
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### Explore Space with Auburn College of Science and Mathematics

Have you always been fascinated by space? Well, so have we! At Auburn University College of Science and Mathematics, we share your fascination and created an unforgettable experience for the rare solar eclipse. Whether you are interested in dedicating your degree to physics or simply captivated by the cosmos, Auburn COSAM has something to offer you.

#### 1. Connection

The solar eclipse drew together students, faculty and astronomy enthusiasts from all walks of life. From campus gatherings to specialized viewing events, Auburn COSAM provided a platform for communal bonding and shared exploration. Through shared excitement, or deep, scientific discussions, the eclipse brought forth connections between all individuals who share a fascination with space

#### 2. Educational Engagement

Beyond the initial fascination, the solar eclipse presented a unique opportunity for educational advancement. Auburn COSAM leveraged this event to spark some curiosity among students and the Auburn community. Through engaging lectures, hands-on activities and the solar eclipse itself, students gained a deeper understanding of space mechanics that happen in everyday life. The eclipse served as a bridge for learning and inspiring students to engage in the science and physics that they encounter in their daily lives outside the classroom.

#### 3. Future exploration

As the solar eclipse passed over Auburn, it left us with more than just a glimpse at the mysteries of space; it left us with a sense of curiosity to look further. Looking ahead, Auburn COSAM remains committed to creating the next generation of inspired scientists. Whether that is through innovative academic programs, research initiatives or community efforts, Auburn is dedicated to enriching the lives of all students through the wonder of science.

The solar eclipse of 2024 may have come and gone, but its impact on Auburn COSAM and the wider community will endure for years to come.



Dozens of Auburn students sit in the green space on Auburn's campus to witness the 2024 solar eclipse. They are at a solar eclipse viewing event hosted by Auburn's College of Sciences and Mathematics.



Students at Auburn University put on their glasses and gather on Samford Lawn to watch the solar eclipse together.



Auburn University's mascot Aubie the Tiger joins in on the fun and watches the solar eclipse on the green space with Auburn students. He is wearing solar eclipse glasses that were distributed by COSAM students.