Mika Lambert - UC Santa Cruz - Personal Statement

Throughout my undergraduate years, I have gained an appreciation for the art of formulating the right questions, and I see graduate school as a pursuit of my own inquiries. Being a first-generation Asian-American on my mother's side, the mindset of community growth coming first was well ingrained in me as my parents were supportive of my astrophysical dreams. When I was a freshman at the University of Arizona, I was overwhelmed by my imposter syndrome due to entering a male-dominated field without recent experience in physics and astronomy, but thanks to supportive faculty and peers, I broke out of my shell and became immersed in the community through connecting with professors during office hours and holding multiple leadership positions in the university's Astronomy Club. In my formative years in college, I have discovered that support from the astronomy and physics community at the University of Arizona has fostered my love for these subjects, especially when my professors for electricity and magnetism and theoretical mechanics showed they genuinely cared for their students and were passionate about the subject. Talking with those professors at office hours furthered my success in my undergraduate career. I was surprised by how their positive attitude towards those subjects improved my morale when taking the class. I am thankful to have attended classes with those instructors because they have been pivotal in my attempt to overcome my imposter syndrome and supported my pursuit of leadership positions in astronomy-related extracurriculars.

I have been greatly involved in the University of Arizona Astronomy Club since joining my first semester. I was elected the Vice President last year, and President this year, leading the club of over 100 active members. Along with increasing the annual funding for the club from $100 to $600, working with the department administrators to organize an out-of-state summer trip to San Diego, and conducting telescope training events for members, I lead the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives of the Astronomy Club. I am a queer woman of Japanese descent, and I view myself as a role model for the incoming members to show that there can be someone who is similar to them in a leadership position. While President, the officers and I implemented a code of conduct as well as increased the amount of DEI presentations during our weekly meetings. I believe this aided the retention of minoritized students in the field and in turn, grew the number of brilliant minds in the field with new questions to be asked. Furthermore, most outreach in which the club participates is volunteer telescope observation events at public elementary schools where students normally do not have the opportunity to explore space through a telescope. Listening to their questions and imaginative explanations for astronomical phenomena will always reignite that spark in me to pursue teaching and science communication.

The work I have done at the University of Arizona has allowed me to not only find who I am and what I want to become but also construct a welcoming place for others by building a community of peers that support each other and diligently work through our challenging classes together. My mother has taught me that we learn most effectively when we are in a community built on mutual trust and camaraderie which I have seen is prevalent in the field of astronomy, and I want to contribute to the field becoming more inclusive and working collaboratively. Through my presidency, I contributed to creating a space for people like me in the University of

Arizona astronomy department and, this is something I will prioritize in future endeavors in your graduate program at UC Santa Cruz.

Being mixed race, I navigate life with a unique lens of trying to preserve my heritage while presenting white. This includes acquiring a minor in Japanese with the goal to hold conversations with my mother and grandparents. I intend to use my privilege to further educate people on areas to improve accessibility in astronomy and uplift the voices of BIPOC astronomers. I plan to continue to make astronomy more accessible to minority communities through local star parties and by investing time in programs similar to the Tucson Initiative for Minoritized student Engagement in Science and TEchnology Program (TIMESTEP) which provides a safe space to share one's experiences with others. As an undergraduate leader for that program, I was a panelist for a discussion on navigating the first two years of the astronomy degree. I learned the value of being a mentor for others entering the field because there were many resources that the astronomy department offered which I was not aware of when I was a freshman and was glad I chould share the knowledge I gained. Expanding on my outreach initiatives in the future, I plan to continue on this path of lowering the barriers to entry to astronomy using the knowledge I've gained from my outreach experience. "Ask an Astronomer" and the UC Santa Cruz Astronomy Club seem like good starting points to get involved in outreach at UC Santa Cruz. Exploring avenues for mutual aid in any form for BIPOC astronomers in the Santa Cruz area is also important to me because relieving any economic and/or societal needs will strengthen our community.

Mika Lambert - Cornell - Personal Statement

Throughout my undergraduate years, I have gained an appreciation for the art of formulating the right questions, and I see graduate school as a pursuit of my own inquiries. Being a first-generation Asian-American on my mother's side, the mindset of community growth coming first was well ingrained in me as my parents were supportive of my astrophysical dreams. When I was a freshman at the University of Arizona, I was overwhelmed by my imposter syndrome due to entering a male-dominated field without recent experience in physics and astronomy, but thanks to supportive faculty and peers, I broke out of my shell and became immersed in the community by connecting with professors during office hours and holding multiple leadership positions in the university's Astronomy Club. Through these formative years in college, I have discovered that support from the astronomy and physics community at the University of Arizona has fostered my love for these subjects, especially when my professors for electricity and magnetism and theoretical mechanics showed they genuinely cared for their students and were passionate about the subject. Talking with those professors at office hours furthered my success in my undergraduate career. I was surprised by how their positive attitude towards those subjects improved my morale when taking the class. I am thankful to have attended classes with these instructors because they have been pivotal in my attempt to overcome my imposter syndrome, and supported my pursuit of leadership positions in astronomy-related extracurriculars.

I have been greatly involved in the University of Arizona Astronomy Club since joining my first semester. I was elected the Vice President last year, and President this year, leading the club of over 100 active members. Along with increasing the annual funding for the club from $100 to $600, working with the department administrators to organize an out-of-state summer trip to San Diego, and conducting telescope training events for members, I lead the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives of the Astronomy Club. I am a queer woman of Japanese descent, and I view myself as a role model for the incoming members to show that there can be someone who is similar to them in a leadership position. While President, the officers and I implemented a code of conduct as well as increased the amount of DEI presentations during our weekly meetings. Furthermore, most outreach in which the club participates is volunteer telescope observation events at public elementary schools where students normally do not have the opportunity to explore space through a telescope. Listening to their questions and imaginative explanations for astronomical phenomena will always reignite that spark in me to pursue teaching and science communication.

The work I have done at UArizona has allowed me to not only find who I am and what I want to become but also construct a welcoming place for others by building a community of peers that mutually support each other and diligently work through our challenging classes together. My family has taught me that we learn most effectively when we are in a community built on mutual trust and camaraderie which I have seen is prevalent in the field of astronomy, and I want to contribute to the field becoming more inclusive and working collaboratively. Through my presidency, I contributed to creating a space for people like me in the UArizona astronomy department and, this is something I will prioritize in future endeavors in your graduate program at Cornell. I see graduate school as a place to explore new ideas and consider it the best way to continue my fervent search for more questions.

Being mixed race, I navigate life with a unique lens of trying to preserve my heritage while presenting white. This includes acquiring a minor in Japanese with the goal to hold conversations with my mother and grandparents. I intend to use my privilege to further educate people on areas to improve accessibility in astronomy and uplift the voices of BIPOC

astronomers. I plan to continue to make astronomy more accessible to minority communities through local star parties and by investing time in programs similar to the Tucson Initiative for Minoritized student Engagement in Science and TEchnology Program (TIMESTEP) which provides a safe space to share one's experiences with others. As an undergraduate leader for the program, I was a panelist for a discussion on navigating the first two years of the astronomy degree. Expanding on my outreach initiatives in the future, I plan to continue on this path of lowering the barriers to entry to astronomy using the knowledge I've gained from my outreach experience. "Ask an Astronomer" and the Spacecraft Planetary Image Facility (SPIF) seem like good starting points to get involved in outreach at Cornell.

Throughout my undergraduate years, I have gained an appreciation for the art of formulating the right questions, and I see graduate school as a pursuit of my own inquiries. When I was a freshman at the University of Arizona, I was overwhelmed by my imposter syndrome due to entering a male-dominated field without recent experience in physics and astronomy, but thanks to supportive faculty and peers, I broke out of my shell and became immersed in the community by connecting with professors during office hours and holding multiple leadership positions in the university's Astronomy Club.

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In my third year as an undergraduate, I accepted a preceptor position for the university's physics introductory mechanics class (PHYS141). I was grateful for the opportunity because this was a way to develop my teaching skills. As a preceptor, I led two discussion sections per week of about 30 students with a graduate student, and the students would work together to complete a tutorial on the current lecture material. The graduate student and I would give a short explanation of the topic and answer questions in an open-ended manner. Being a preceptor for this introductory class, after taking my upper-division physics courses, instilled a new-found appreciation for the foundation introductory physics classes laid for me. This experience gave me the reassurance that I love to teach science, and I want to continue to do so in my career.

Being mixed race, I navigate life with a unique lens of trying to preserve my heritage while presenting white. Expanding on my outreach initiatives in the future, I plan to continue on this path of lowering the barriers to entry to astronomy using the knowledge I've gained from my outreach experience. "Astronomy Live!" seems like good starting point to get involved in outreach at UCLA.