



# The STEM Career Expo: A Fermilab Success Story

Spencer Pasero

International Particle Physics Outreach Group Collaboration Meeting

23 May 2019

# What is the STEM Career Expo?

Before I start, let me tell you what I'm talking about – then I'll tell the story of how we got there.

- Annual event held at Fermilab for high school students
- Professionals working in Science, Technology, Mathematics, and Engineering (STEM) fields come to discuss their careers with students



# What is the STEM Career Expo?

Before I start, let me tell you what I'm talking about – then I'll tell the story of how we got there.

- Hybrid event:
  - Booths allow students to have extended one-on-one conversations with professionals
  - Panels allow students to hear presentations from many professionals in one session





# A Partnership Story

This is a Fermilab success story, but like most success stories, it's a story about working together.

- Started with school college & career counselors
- Wanted to complement a health-care career session offered at local hospital
- Partnership with Fermilab Friends for Science Education, who funds the event.



# A Partnership Story

This is a Fermilab success story, but like most success stories, it's a story about working together.

- Reached out to Fermilab; world-class center of science and engineering in their neighborhood
- We saw opportunity not only to highlight Fermilab, but to partner with companies and institutions across Chicagoland



# What makes it work?

One of my colleagues had a key insight that brings it all together:

- The Expo is a Fermilab event because it's at Fermilab.
- Why will anyone else want to be part of it?
- Ask participating professionals to keep the focus on their careers, not where they work





# What makes it work?

This small shift in focus does a lot to make the event work:

- Brings in students who may not have an intrinsic interest in physics; gives us a chance to let them know about the lab and all the things we do.
- Helps us broaden the base of participating professionals
- Makes it feel more like a collaboration and less like a competition: no recruiters; no job-seekers



# 12 Years and Growing

First Expo was in 2008:

- Had to do a lot of recruiting and calling to convince professionals to attend: different kind of event than typical recruiting session
- Having the connection to the school college & career counselors was a big help in bringing students in, but largely from their own schools





# 12 Years and Growing

Most recent Expo was last month:

- 150 professionals attended with very little recruiting
- Approximately 1,200 students and parents attended from dozens of schools and six states!
- Our Congresswoman, Lauren Underwood, (pictured) asked to attend and welcome the students.



# Summary

- STEM Career Expo has become a very successful major annual event at Fermilab.
- Partnering with schools and STEM employers in the area brings benefits to the lab and to the businesses.
- Key insight was the focus on careers rather than specific companies/employers.
- Looking forward to many more years!