

Tiffany Summerscales

John Nevins Andrews Medallion

May 6, 2018



This morning the recipient of the John Nevins Andrews Medallion is Tiffany Summerscales, whose contributions to landmark scientific discoveries and faithful dedication to teaching and mentoring students have distinguished her among her colleagues.

Summerscales graduated from Andrews University with a BS in mathematics and physics, then went to Penn State University for graduate studies, where she earned her PhD in physics in 2006. The title of her dissertation was “Gravitational Wave Astronomy with LIGO: From Data to Science.” Andrews University became the fortunate recipient of her skills when she was immediately hired as assistant professor of physics. She became a full professor of physics in 2016.

Also in 2016, Tiffany Summerscales was one of more than 1,000 scientists who were involved in the breakthrough discovery of gravitational waves by the LIGO Scientific Collaboration, otherwise known as the Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Observatory. As a result of this discovery, LIGO was able to prove that Einstein’s 1916 gravitational wave theory is correct. While only three project leaders were directly recognized with the Nobel Prize in Physics in late 2017, the discovery would not have been possible without the collaboration’s members from 103 institutions spread across 18 countries. Representing one of these 103 institutions, Summerscales and 22 Andrews University undergraduates were actively involved in contributing to this landmark scientific discovery. Some of their continuing research includes working on an algorithm involved with locating and analyzing gravitational wave signals.

Summerscales’ interest with gravitational waves has also been the topic of numerous talks, forums, papers and research throughout her career. One of her most recent talks, “What can we learn from Gravitational Waves?” was given at the Michiana Astronomical Society Meeting in November 2016. She has also contributed to over 120 peer reviewed journal articles related to her research.

In addition to her contribution to science, Summerscales is committed to the education of her students. As an active mentor for undergraduate and J.N. Andrews Honors student researchers, Summerscales has made a personal impact on many students. She has mentored seven student presentations. Some of her student mentees have even gone on to present at the American Physical Society (APS), the American Astronomical Society (AAS) and the LIGO Scientific Collaboration (LSC).

As a result of her commitment to teaching and research, Summerscales received the College of Arts & Sciences Excellence Award in 2010, the Daniel A. Augsburg Excellence in Teaching Award in 2012 and the Siegfried H. Horn Excellence in Research & Creative Scholarship Award in 2017. She is also a member of various honor and professional societies including Pi Mu Epsilon, Sigma Pi Sigma and the American Association of Physics Teachers.

When she isn’t teaching, mentoring students or serving on LIGO committees, Summerscales enjoys reading and exploring nature on foot, mountain bike or kayak.

For her contributions to the field of physics and gravitational wave research, and her dedicated service in teaching and mentoring students, the faculty of Andrews University is proud to present Tiffany Summerscales with the John Nevins Andrews Medallion.