

Learning Astronomy by Doing Astronomy: Collaborative Lecture Activities

By Stacy Palen, Ana Larson

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Stacy Palen is an award-winning professor in the Physics Department and Director of the Ott Planetarium at Weber State University. She received her BS degree from Rutgers University, and her PhD from the University of Iowa. Dr. Palen does research in the death of Sun-like stars, and formal and informal astronomy education. She spends much of her time thinking, teaching, and writing about the applications of science in everyday life. She then puts that science to use on her small farm in Ogden, Utah.

Ana Larson received a double bachelor's degree in physics and astronomy from the University of Washington in 1990. She obtained her PhD from the University of Victoria, Victoria, B.C., Canada, in 1996, and it was during her time there that she started developing activities for the undergraduates to enhance their lectures in astronomy. Upon her graduation, she joined the University of Washington, where she is now a senior lecturer in astronomy. On average, she has taught introductory astronomy at least twice a year for the past 17+ years, most frequently for the large lecture-based course. Her developing and thorough testing of introductory, lecture-related activities has been an on-going effort for over a decade. Having recognized that students need to see connections between what is read in the textbook, taught in class, and practiced, she has made sure that the activities remain relevant as well as challenging. Ana is also the director of the Jacobsen Observatory on the University of Washington campus and guides undergraduates in all majors in their educational outreach efforts as they give their talks and introduce the night sky to the public during public viewing nights.

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