



2015 Provost Award for Excellence in Research and Scholarship

Dr. Steve Whisnant *Department of Physics and Astronomy*

Dr. Steve Whisnant earned his BS in physics (cum laude) from Appalachian State University in 1975 and his MS (1978) and PhD in nuclear physics (1982) from Purdue University. From 1983-1991 he was a postdoctoral research associate at the University of South Carolina. Whisnant's research there focused on the study of pion-nucleus interactions at energies below 100 MeV at Los Alamos National Laboratory. In 1988, Whisnant became a guest scientist in the Laser Electron Gamma Source (LEGS) collaboration at the Brookhaven National Laboratory in New York where he studied nuclear physics using polarized gamma rays.

Dr. Whisnant joined the faculty at the University of South Carolina in 1991 and assumed a leading role in the development of a novel polarized target for use at LEGS. He also became a member of the CLAS Collaboration at Jefferson Lab in Newport News, Virginia. His work began to focus on production of nucleon resonances and their decay and the characterization of the fundamental properties of the nucleon using polarized beams and targets. In 2005, Whisnant joined the High Intensity Gamma Source (HIGS) collaboration at Duke University to use polarized beams and targets and to study nucleons and complex nuclei at low energies. Since 2001, Dr. Whisnant and his JMU undergraduates have produced all the high purity hydrogen used for experiments at Brookhaven and Jefferson Laboratories.

Whisnant joined James Madison University in 2001 as Head of the Department of Physics and Astronomy. During his tenure, the department has grown to become one of the largest undergraduate physics departments in the nation. In 2016, the department opens the Madison Radiation Laboratory in Madison Hall making it one of the very few undergraduate departments in the nation to have an on-campus nuclear physics facility.

During his career, he has mentored 45 undergraduates, three graduate students and five postdocs; coauthored over 90 invited and contributed papers; presented seminars in Europe, South Africa, and locations throughout the United States; secured over \$6M in grants to support his work; and published 85 papers.