

Preface

Exactly how many Physics Education Research Conferences (PERCs) there have been remains somewhat undetermined. Thomas Koch and Robert Fuller claim (in the Proceedings to the 1998 PERC) that the first meeting was hosted in 1994 at North Carolina State University. The second meeting was held in Denver in 1997 and subsequent meetings have been held annually. So the 2001 Physics Education Research Conference, held on July 25-26 in Rochester, New York, as part of the 123rd summer meeting of the American Association of Physics Teachers, is either the 5th annual or 6th overall meeting of the PER community. What is indisputable is the growth that has occurred in the community over this time. Eighty-three participants are listed in the 1998 Proceedings; over 150 attended this year's meeting.

With such a vibrant and growing community, it is important that we begin to leave a paper trail. This volume is the result of a belief amongst the editors, no doubt shared by others, that much good physics education research goes unpublished. All too often "background" research consists of looking up in the Announcer to see who gave what talk and then calling that person to get a summary of the results, which never appeared in print. In organizing these proceedings we tried to go beyond Koch & Fuller's admittedly informal proceedings in which they frequently transcribed recordings of the sessions. Two thirds of the papers in this journal were carefully reviewed and critiqued by members of the community. The remaining papers were solicited from presenters at the conference. We feel this blend of invited and peer-reviewed papers has resulted in a volume of high quality that mirrors the goal of Koch & Fuller to provide "a snapshot of the research in physics education community."

The editors would like to thank many people upon whom the success of the PERC and these proceedings depended. First and foremost are the members of the community who took the time to provide careful review of the papers in this journal. The many excellent suggestions and criticisms played an integral part in the form of these proceedings. Next, of course, are the people who made presentations, hosted break-out sessions, or contributed posters at the PERC. The format of the PERC was developed with the help of a Planning Committee consisting of Jose Mestre, Robert Fuller, Paula Heron, and Bao Lei and an Advisory Committee of Alice Churukian, Charles Henderson, Laura Lising, Dwain Desbien, and David Abbot.