

**VAST 2018 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE**  
*"Diversify and Strengthen Science for All"*

**FRIDAY MORNING GENERAL SESSION SPEAKER**  
**(Sponsored by National Geographic Learning/Cengage)**



**Munazza Alam, National Geographic Young Explorer**

***"Building Stronger Classrooms: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity"***

While efforts to build inclusive spheres of learning have typically been linked to welcoming diverse perspectives and backgrounds, these attempts do not address longstanding barriers that result in social disparities. In this talk, I will discuss the challenges to tackling equity, the importance of fostering equitable learning environments, and daily practices to create more equitable classrooms.

**Munazza Alam** is a second year graduate student in the Department of Astronomy at Harvard University. She was a physics major at CUNY Hunter College in New York City, and has worked in various research groups in the Astrophysics Department at the American Museum of Natural History. Munazza's research interests include the detection and detailed characterization of the atmospheres of exoplanets, or planets beyond the Solar System. Her work involves using data from the Hubble Space Telescope to infer the presence of different molecules in their atmospheres.

To collect data for her research, Munazza has used world-class telescopes at the Kitt Peak National Observatory in Tuscon, Arizona; the Mauna Kea Observatories in Hilo, Hawai'i; and the Las Campanas Observatory in La Serena, Chile. When Munazza isn't contemplating the cosmos, she is reading anything she can get her hands on, trying new ethnic foods, and learning new languages.