Bylaws of the Department of Astronomy

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1. Mission

The Department of Astronomy is committed to fostering an environment of mutual support, continuous growth, and collaborative discovery. We strive to create a community where all members feel valued, heard, and empowered to pursue their passion for understanding the cosmos.

Mutual Support and Community: We cultivate a supportive atmosphere through transparent policies, open communication channels, regular department-wide meetings, accessible policy repositories, and ongoing mentorship.

Fostering a Growth Mindset: We encourage continuous learning and self-improvement through weekly seminars, cutting-edge course offerings, and dedicated time for reflection and goal setting. We promote a "failure-positive" environment where setbacks become opportunities for learning and innovation.

Collaboration: We recognize that groundbreaking discoveries emerge from diverse perspectives and skill sets. We actively seek collaborative projects within our department and across disciplines, implementing rotating project leadership to develop leadership skills and foster shared ownership in our collective endeavors.

By focusing on these principles, we aim to create an inclusive, dynamic, and innovative environment that pushes the boundaries of astronomical knowledge while nurturing the growth and well-being of every department member.

2. Governance

I. Regulations

Department members are governed by:

- Federal and State laws and regulations
- UW policies and rules
- The Faculty Code
- College policies and rules
- These departmental bylaws

II. Voting

Voting Members: All voting faculty as defined by Faculty Code Section 21-32 and College of Arts & Sciences procedures.

Voting Procedures:

- Procedural votes in meetings by show of hands
- Policy and personnel votes by anonymous electronic ballot with prior discussion, and according to the voting matrix
- Electronic ballots distributed with reasonable response deadlines using secure platforms
- Quorum majority required (Faculty Code Section 23-46):
    - At meetings: majority of those voting when at least half of voting members present
    - electronic ballots: majority of those voting when at least half cast ballots

III. Executive Committee

Structure: The Chair serves as chair of the Executive Committee.

Function: The Executive Committee prepares information, provides advice, and makes recommendations on departmental policy to the faculty.

Election and Length of Term: The chair appoints the executive committee at the start of each academic year, and the Graduate Program Coordinator, Undergraduate Program Coordinate, Associate Chair, and Faculty Senate Representative, as well as the Head Administrator, are all members.

IV. Standing Committees and Roles

Standing Committees:

- Executive Committee
- Personnel Committee
- Prize Nomination and Awards Committee
- Undergraduate Program Committee
- Inclusion & Access Committee (SEA/Change)
- Graduate Admissions Committee
- Research Qualification Committee
- Computing Committee
- APO Time Allocation Committee
- Space Committee

Administrative Roles (annual appointments unless otherwise noted):

- Graduate Program Coordinator (three-year term)
- Undergraduate Program Coordinator (three-year term)
- Associate Chair (three-year term)

- Faculty Director of Department Outreach
- MRO Director and Associate Director
- DIRAC Director and Deputy Director
- APO Deputy Director
- Planetarium Director

Representative Roles:

- Faculty Senate Representative
- AURA Board Representative
- ARC Board Representative and Users Representative

Functions:

- Chair appoints committee members and chairs
- Ad hoc committees may be established by faculty vote or by the Chair
- Personnel Committee handles promotions, merit increases, reappointments, and tenure recommendations
- Graduate and Undergraduate Program Coordinators oversee respective academic programs

V. Faculty Retention

Per Faculty Code Section 24-71 B-3, retention negotiations are led by the Chair in collaboration with the College and affected faculty member. The Chair informs voting faculty and seeks broad concurrence. Additional faculty consultation on retention package details occurs when exceptional circumstances warrant it.

VI. Merit Review

Annual Merit Assessment:

- Chair convenes merit review committee (Chair, Associate Chair, and two additional full Professors)
- Faculty submit yearly activity reports and CV
- Materials available to entire voting faculty
- Merit levels: highly meritorious, meritorious, non-meritorious
- Assessment considers research, scientific leadership, teaching, student mentoring, service, and public engagement
- Three-year rolling average (adjusted for leaves)
- Faculty below Professor rank: reviewed by full merit committee
- Full Professors: reviewed by Chair with Associate Chair consultation
- All rankings are voted on according to the voting matrix

VII. Teaching Expectations

Annual Teaching Loads (per FTE):

- Teaching track: 6 classes

- Tenure track assistant: 2 classes + 1-credit seminar
- Tenure track associate/full: 2 classes + 1-credit seminar, or 3 classes (alternating roughly every other year)
- Buyouts allowed (50% salary cost, one quarter limit, advance notice required)

VIII. Meetings

Regular Meetings: Department faculty meetings held every other week or as needed, called by the Chair.

Calling Meetings: Chair may call department meetings. Faculty may request meetings through the Chair.

Quorum and Voting: Per Faculty Code Section 23-46, quorum majority required for all votes.

Personnel Matters: Anonymous ballots required for all personnel actions (appointments, tenure, promotion).

IX. Amendments

Review: Bylaws reviewed every five years or as needed.

Amendment Process:

- Any voting faculty member may propose amendments
- Voting faculty must approve amendments by majority vote
- Revisions recorded with effective dates

X. Institutional Record

All faculty-approved policies remain in effect until formally revised or eliminated by faculty vote. Current policies maintained in department records and shared with faculty.