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**BYLAWS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICS AND ASTRONOMY
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH**
**Approved by the Tenured and Tenure Stream Faculty, November 15, 2005;
modifications approved July 21, 2006**

1. Preamble

The Bylaws of the Department of Physics and Astronomy described in this document supersede any extant earlier Bylaws of this Department.

In addition to these Bylaws, the governance of the Department is subject to the Bylaws of the School of Arts and Sciences (A&S) of the University of Pittsburgh, as published in the FAS Gazette at the beginning of each academic year.

If a conflict should arise between these Bylaws and A&S Bylaws, the A&S Bylaws take precedence.

2. Governance of the Department

2a. The Department Chair

An elected Department Chair shall be responsible for the administration of the Department, shall represent the Department to the university administration, and shall be responsible for the expenditure of Department funds.

The Chair shall have full authority to make day-to-day administrative decisions for the Department, in accordance with University of Pittsburgh regulations and policies, and to supervise the administrative and technical staff of the Department.

All committees appointed by the Chair to perform specific departmental tasks, with the exception of faculty search committees and faculty promotion committees, serve as advisory committees to the chair. However, in the spirit of collegiality, the Chair is obliged to explain to the faculty decisions or actions at odds with specific recommendations of departmental committees.

The Chair's prerogative to overrule committee decisions does not apply to committees charged with evaluating the academic performance of individual students, such as the Graduate Committee, examination committees, and doctoral committees. The Chair may intervene only if, in his or her judgment, those committees have violated acceptable standards or have otherwise acted improperly.

While faculty search committees and promotion committees are appointed by the Chair, their primary function is to advise and provide recommendations to the Department.

Therefore, the Chair shall not seek to influence the recommendations of such committees but shall present them to the faculty and transmit them to the A&S Dean, as appropriate, without changes or amendments. However, the Chair may express his or her position in a separate communication to the Dean.

2b. Election of the Department Chair

The Department Chair shall be elected to serve for a term of three years. Only full-time tenured faculty members of the Department may be elected to Chair. Under normal circumstances no person shall hold the office of Chair for more than two consecutive, three-year terms. An absolute 2/3 majority of the full TTS faculty can deem the situation “unusual” and waive this requirement.

The Department Chair shall be elected by two thirds of those members of the voting membership of the Department who vote either in person or by absentee ballot. The voting membership of the department is defined as

- (a) Each full-time, tenure-stream faculty member with a primary or joint appointment has one vote.
- (b) Each full-time NTS faculty member with the rank of Lecturer or Senior Lecturer has one vote.
- (c) Graduate students with full graduate status have one vote cast by a representative chosen by the graduate students.
- (d) Staff members of the Department have two votes cast by representatives chosen by the staff.
- (e) Post-doctoral Scholars, Post-doctoral Associates, and Research Associates have one vote cast by a representative of the group.
- (f) Research faculty (e.g., Research Professors, Associate Professors and Assistant Professors) have one vote cast by a representative of the group.

The election of the Chair shall take place during a meeting of the voting membership of the Department. The election process shall be supervised by a tenured member of the faculty (the “Election Officer”) assisted by a nominating committee of faculty members. The Election Officer shall be selected by the Department Chair or by the faculty in the absence of a selection by the Chair. The Election Officer is the Chair of the nominating committee, which is responsible for soliciting nominations through consultations with eligible voters, discussions with prospective candidates, obtaining the consent of nominees to serve if elected, and making public the names of candidates for the office.

The current Department Chair or a candidate for that office shall not serve as Election Officer.

The election of the Chair shall be conducted by secret ballot. If none of the candidates wins a two-thirds majority of the votes on the first ballot, a second ballot shall be conducted in which the voting membership that is present at the meeting selects the

winning candidate from the two candidates who obtained the largest and the second-largest number of votes on the first ballot. Voting shall continue until one candidate wins by a two-thirds majority. A two-thirds majority is defined as two-thirds of those who actually state a preference for one of the candidates. Invalid ballots or abstentions are not to be included in determining the two-thirds majority.

Absentee ballots for the election of the chair are permissible provided that they are submitted and received by the Election Officer before the election meeting. A voting member who is unable to attend the election meeting shall submit an absentee ballot in the form of a ranked list of candidates. The Election Officer shall select from that list the most preferred candidate who has not been eliminated in earlier ballots, and enter that vote on behalf of the absentee.

The group votes shall be cast by delegates of the constituents listed under (c), (d), and (e). On the first ballot, these delegates are required to vote as instructed by their constituents. On the second ballot, they shall vote as on the first ballot unless their preferred candidate has been eliminated, in which case they are free to vote according to their own preference. If further ballots are required, the representatives are free to vote for the candidate of their preference.

To allow candidates to present their views and to respond to questions, the Election Officer shall convene a meeting of the full Department approximately one week before the election meeting. This meeting shall be open to all members of the Department, regardless of their voting status. Additional nominations from the floor are acceptable at this meeting if they are supported by at least two voting members. This meeting need not take place if the incumbent chairperson seeks reelection and if there is no other candidate opposing the reelection of the current chair.

2c. Resignation of the Chair

If the Chair resigns before the end of the three-year term, or is unable to perform his or her duties, the Chair shall designate an Acting Chair for a period not to exceed 6 months, within which period of time a new election shall take place. If the Chair is unable to designate an Acting Chair, or prefers not to do so, a request shall be made of the A&S Dean to appoint an Acting Chair.

2d. Removal of the Chair from office

In the event that a two-thirds majority of the tenured faculty have lost confidence in the performance of the Chair and have signed a petition asking for the removal of the Chair from office, a request shall be made of the Dean of A&S for appointment of an Acting Chair who will serve until a new Chair is elected.

3. Role of the faculty and others in decision making

Subgroups of the faculty form several committees. The “Teaching Faculty” comprises tenured and tenure stream faculty, and full-time teaching NTS faculty. The “Tenure Committee” comprises associate professors and professors with tenure. The “Professors Committee” comprises the full professors of the department. The “TTS Committee” comprises all tenured and tenure stream faculty.

The Chair shall seek the advice and consent from faculty members and, when appropriate, staff members, graduate students and undergraduate majors on all substantive policy issues involving the department, such as new faculty appointments, faculty promotions, programmatic changes in areas of concentration, curriculum changes, graduate or undergraduate program requirements, academic priorities, general policies concerning course and committee structures and responsibilities, and budget policy.

The Chair shall submit such issues to a vote in a meeting of the appropriate body. Minutes of all such meetings shall be kept by the Chair or a designated faculty or staff member. The minutes shall be made available for inspection in the Department office and, unless their accuracy is questioned within two weeks by a person who was present at the meeting, they become the official record of the meeting.

3a. General meetings of the Department

The Chair shall call at least one “general faculty meeting” for TTS faculty, NTS faculty, Research faculty, Emeritus faculty, plus representatives of full-time departmental staff (2), graduate students (1), post-doctoral scholars, associates and research associates (1 representative as a group) at the beginning of each academic year in which he or she shall report on the state of the department, and shall respond to questions from the members of the Department.

3b. Meetings of the teaching faculty of the Department

The chair shall convene the TTS and NTS teaching faculty to discuss and to seek approval for proposed substantive changes in the curriculum, examinations, and other matters that affect the teaching program of the department.

3c. Meetings of the tenure-stream or tenured faculty

A&S Bylaws require that the Chair shall furnish the Dean with evidence on the extent to which the Department faculty favor or oppose new faculty appointments, promotion of faculty to tenured status, and promotion to full professor status. The Chair shall fulfill this obligation by asking the appropriate faculty committee for a vote on all proposed new appointments and faculty promotions and by reporting the outcome of the vote to the Dean. Since such votes represent a recommendation of the faculty to the Dean, the Chair shall remain impartial in such proceedings and shall give all members of search and promotion committees fair and equal opportunities to present their views.

To avoid possible conflicts of interest, the Chair shall not be a member of a faculty search committee or faculty promotion committee, unless the Chair is one of a small number of faculty members who have sufficient technical knowledge to judge the merits of a proposed new appointment or a promotion, or in the case of a new hiring initiative in an area of research that is not well represented in the department. In that circumstance, however, the Chair shall designate a senior faculty member to preside over faculty meetings in which the case is discussed.

The Chair shall submit all proposed new, tenure stream faculty appointments to a vote in a meeting of the tenure committee. Non-tenured faculty and other knowledgeable persons may be invited to attend if their advice is deemed beneficial to arrive at a fair and informed decision. For instance, non-tenured faculty members who have served on the search committee, professors *emeritus* of the department, or faculty members of other departments or universities may be invited to offer expert opinions, but they may not vote.

The Chair shall submit all proposed faculty promotions to tenure or proposed associate professor hires with tenure to a vote of the tenure committee.

The Chair shall submit all proposed faculty promotions to full professor or proposed hires to the full professor level to a vote of the professors committee of the Department. If the Chair is not of full rank, a full professor of the Department shall preside over the meeting of the full professors.

The Chair shall submit all proposed non-tenure-stream faculty appointments and all research faculty appointments to the TTS committee for approval.

The Chair, after due consultation, shall submit hiring or programmatic plans to the TTS committee for approval.

3d. Quorum

To conduct actionable business at any of the above meetings a quorum of 60% of the full appropriate body is required.

3e. Absentee ballots

At the discretion of the chair absentee voting may be permitted for individuals out of town at the time of the meeting. This possibility must be announced in advance, materials have to be made available, and votes must be recorded before the meeting in question. Should a final vote not be taken at the meeting in question, absentee ballots are voided.

4. Promotions

Each spring the appropriate faculty committee shall consider whether there is a prima facie case for promotion of individual faculty members. In the event of a positive decision, appropriate steps to prepare the promotion case, including the solicitation of external, expert opinion will be initiated. Assistant professors entering their sixth year will be deemed to have satisfied conditions for a prima facie case, and appropriate steps will be taken.

5. Officers of the Department

The Chair may delegate some academic or administrative functions to other faculty, for instance by appointing a Director of Graduate Study, a Director of Undergraduate Study, and graduate and undergraduate Academic Advisors. These officers may make day-to-day decisions without seeking the Chair's approval, but they shall consult with the Chair before making decisions that may have long-term consequences for the Department. The Chair has the right to make the final decision.

6. Departmental Committees

The Department shall have a Planning and Budget Committee constituted according to applicable University of Pittsburgh guidelines. The committee can be called on to advise on departmental budget and planning matters that are not the purview of the tenured and tenure stream faculty and/or the Chair. A standing Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, consisting of faculty members who have recently taught undergraduate courses, the departmental Director of Undergraduate Studies and at least one undergraduate student representative, shall be appointed by the Chair. Proposed curricular changes, new courses and other substantive matters shall be referred to the Curriculum Committee before recommendations, as appropriate, are taken to the faculty for approval. Other committees necessary for the smooth running of the department and for special purposes shall be appointed and charged by the Chair.

7. Amendments to the Bylaws

These Bylaws may be amended or modified by an absolute majority of the full TTS committee. Changes in bylaws take effect after being passed at two meetings of the TTS committee.