

Committee Membership

Roger Chevalier, *Chair (December 2010)*
University of Virginia

Edward F. Guinan (*December 2010*)
Villanova University

John A. Graham, *Secretary (December 2010)*
Carnegie Institute of Washington

Committee Members:

American Astronomical Society (AAS)

Paul W. Hodge (*December 2008*)
University of Washington

Lynne Hillenbrand (*December 2009*)
California Institute of Technology

Edward Churchwell (*December 2010*)
University of Wisconsin, Madison

American Astronomical Society Council

Kevin Marvel (*December 2008*)
American Astronomical Society

Megan Donahue (*December 2009*)
Michigan State University

Lee Hartmann (*December 2010*)
University of Michigan

Astronomy Section, NAS

James M. Moran (*December 2008*)
Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics

Wallace Sargent (*December 2009*)
California Institute of Technology

Ken Kellermann (*December 2010*)
National Radio Astronomy Observatory

Representing Various Offices

John P. Huchra, *Past Chair, USNC/IAU (December 2010) and Chair, NAS Astronomy Section (April 2010)*
Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics

Craig Wheeler, *President, AAS (June 2008)*
University of Texas

Robert E. Williams, *President-Elect IAU (August 2009)*
Space Telescope Science Institute

Martha Haynes, *Vice President, IAU (August 2009)*
Cornell University

Representing NAS Offices

Anneila Sargent, *Chair, NRC Board on Physics & Astronomy (June 2008)*
California Institute of Technology

Michael Clegg, *NAS Foreign Secretary (June 2010)*
University of California, Irvine

Kathie Bailey-Mathae, *BISO Director*
The National Academies

THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES
Advisers to the Nation on Science, Engineering, and Medicine

U.S. National Committee for the International Astronomical Union

2008



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*Representing U.S. Astronomers
to the
International Astronomical Union*



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U.S. National Committee for the International Astronomical Union

What is the IAU?

The International Astronomical Union (IAU), founded in 1919, promotes worldwide cooperation in astronomy. The IAU also serves as the internationally recognized authority for assigning designations to celestial bodies and any surface features on them.

The IAU is unique among the international scientific unions in that it has both national members and individual members. IAU individual members are professional astronomers all over the world, at the Ph.D. level or beyond who are actively engaged in professional research and education in astronomy. Currently, the IAU has 8,864 Individual Members and 61 National Members

What is the USNC/IAU?

The U.S. National Committee for the International Astronomical Union (USNC/IAU) formally represents the United States on behalf of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), the U.S. national member. In its role as a liaison between U.S. and international astronomers, the USNC/IAU maintains close ties with the American Astronomical Society (AAS) and other astronomical organizations.

The USNC/IAU recommends astronomers for individual membership to the IAU, proposes U.S. astronomers for membership on Commissions of the IAU, and works with national committees in other countries to plan meetings, organize symposia, and arrange cooperative research programs.

What does the USNC/IAU do?

Support for Young Astronomers

The USNC/IAU strongly promotes the involvement of young astronomers in IAU activities, and supports events such as the Young Astronomers Workshop at the 2006 General Assembly in Prague. This workshop provided an opportunity for young astronomers to meet with members of the IAU Executive Committee, representatives from various national space agencies, and other senior astronomers to exchange ideas and discuss research, education, and employment opportunities.

Women in Astronomy

The USNC/IAU encourages the participation of women in all aspects of astronomy and the IAU. The committee supported the special Women's Luncheon at the 2006 General Assembly.

Year of Astronomy

The year 2009 marks the 400th anniversary of Galileo Galilei's first use of a telescope to observe the cosmos. With his discovery that the Earth is not alone, he opened the way to a new conception of the universe. Recognizing the importance of Galileo and at the request of the IAU and its members, UNESCO passed a resolution proclaiming 2009 as the International Year of Astronomy. The International Year of Astronomy will provide a unique opportunity to spread awareness of astronomy and attract young people to careers in science and technology. The USNC/IAU will look for opportunities to work with scientific and industry partners to celebrate and promote this important anniversary.

How is U.S. astronomy represented internationally?

U.S. Interaction with IAU

The USNC/IAU actively participates in the IAU General Assemblies. To maintain leadership in the international union, the USNC/IAU nominates U.S. scientists to leadership positions and provides input to the union on scientific questions.

International Initiatives in Astronomy

Besides purely astronomical issues, the USNC/IAU participates in efforts to address global issues that impact the larger scientific community as a whole. These include policies on data and access to digital information, national security and free circulation of scientists, electronic publishing and archiving, and capacity building in science.

Nomenclature

Every science discipline requires precise internationally-recognized terms to describe objects and processes in the field. No single country can take such steps alone. In 2006, delegates to the IAU General Assembly made headlines around the world as they discussed and adopted a definition of planet which, in turn, resulted in the reclassification of Pluto.

Travel Grants

The American Astronomical Society (AAS) administers a program of travel grants for U.S.-based astronomers to attend international meetings including all varieties of IAU meetings. This program was funded by the NSF with the endorsement of the USNC/IAU. A special grant cycle is operated in years with IAU General Assembly and is coordinated closely with both the IAU Secretariat and the USNC/IAU. Details of this program are available at <http://www.aas.org/grants/itg.html>.