

AAS

Strategic Plan

2021–2026



BUILDING ON OUR STRENGTHS

The American Astronomical Society exists to enable astronomical research and the communication of its discoveries to professionals and to the public. Currently, the AAS has more than 8,000 members, publishes the premier astronomy journals, organizes meetings attended by thousands of its members, and represents the voice of astronomy to all.

To strengthen these core functions and ensure the continued preeminence of the AAS in astronomy, planning began in 2019 to revisit the Mission statement, formulate a Vision statement and list of Values, and consider areas needing improvements. The Board of Trustees, Division and Committee Chairs, and an outside consultant formulated this strategic plan through five monthly virtual meetings. A subcommittee consisting of the President, President-Elect, a Board member, and chairs of two committees then incorporated suggestions from members following postings of the ongoing drafts at the January and June meetings, as well as from a wider distribution from individuals to departments.

This document presents that plan in no priority order. Every goal and action is intended to support astronomical science and particular strategic areas we believe will most benefit from focused attention. This is not a complete statement of actions, for no plan can forecast every unforeseen circumstance. Rather, this strategic plan emphasizes areas where we believe additional attention will enhance our mission by building on our traditional strengths in advancing astronomical science. The Society will review its goals annually at the Board of Trustees and Strategic Assembly meetings and will make modifications and add action items as needs arise.

IMAGE CREDITS

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Strategic Priority 1: P. Marenfeld & NOIRLab/NSF/AURA

Strategic Priority 5: .A.Rector (NOIRLab/NSF/AURA) / Hubble Heritage Team (STScI/AURA/NASA)

THE MISSION OF THE AAS

To enhance and share humanity's scientific understanding of the universe as a diverse and inclusive astronomical community.

THE VISION OF THE AAS

To create a world where all people value and benefit from a scientific understanding of our universe.

Our Values

Curiosity

We conduct research driven by our curiosity about the universe.

Integrity

We act with integrity, ethical behavior, and transparency as we perform our investigations and share our results.

Inclusivity

We use fair and accessible practices to create a diverse and welcoming scientific community.

Empowerment

We mentor and support our early career members, using our resources to create a positive environment for them and for our astronomical community.

Sustainability

We accomplish our work using environmentally sensitive actions rooted in scientific understanding.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

Address significant global issues that affect astronomy.

Goals

1. Commit AAS professionals to advocate for astronomy and astronomy-related issues in the USA and around the world.
2. Minimize the impact on astronomy of the burgeoning industrialization of space as well as the degradation of the sky from space and from the ground.
3. Develop and implement a plan for the role of the AAS in mitigating climate change.
4. Provide support for AAS members in times of crisis.

Actions

Government advocacy

Advocate for implementation of the Decadal Surveys Recommendations.

Advocate for STEM education, in coordination with Education Committee goals and initiatives.

Advocate for funding, programs, policies, and regulations that broadly benefit the discipline.

Ensure the AAS community is informed on government policies affecting astronomy and provide leadership on appropriate actions.

Dark and quiet skies

Establish and advocate policy and position points concerning outdoor ground-based lighting and protection of the full EM spectrum.

Provide training and resources to help members carry out dark sky advocacy to the public and to elected officials and their staff.

Large satellite constellations

Establish and advocate policy and position points concerning the increasing satellite presence in Earth orbit.

Implement relevant recommendations in the SATCON1 workshop reports.

Participate in multi-stakeholder efforts, in collaboration with appropriate organizations and agencies, on issues associated with the industrialization of space.

Climate change

Charge a task force to identify the Paris Agreement goals the Society can address and implement measures to meet them.

Professional support

Establish an emergency program to support members in need in times of crisis, most immediately the COVID-19 pandemic.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

Build equitable, diverse, and inclusive (EDI) practices within the astronomical community.

Goals

1. Obtain sufficient staffing capacity at the AAS Executive Office to support existing committees and initiatives and to implement new ones.
2. Continually improve access to and equitable participation in meetings, events, journals, and all AAS services.
3. Increase representation of marginalized groups in AAS leadership at all levels.
4. Implement recommendations made by recent task forces and consortia to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion in astronomy.
5. Promote just and equitable scientific standards and behavior in the AAS member community.

Actions

Staff support

Compile a portfolio of EDI activities and initiatives, identify challenges and opportunities for the existing EDI committees (CSMA, CSWA, SGMA, SVOC, and WGAD), and assess their need for additional staff support.

Create and implement a plan for providing staff support of EDI efforts as needed.

Access and participation

Continually measure participation and inclusion of marginalized groups (i.e., those advocated for by the EDI committees) in AAS events, identify barriers to full participation, and implement remedies.

Identify existing barriers and inequalities in AAS publishing and subscriptions and implement remedies, including double-anonymous review and training for new editors, reviewers, and authors.

Make EDI efforts a regular part of AAS meetings, not just special sessions.

Explore ways to use *Sky & Telescope* to support EDI.

Equitable representation in leadership

Implement nomination and review procedures to continually measure representation across multiple identities in AAS officers, trustees, division leadership, committees, and award recipients.

Provide leadership development training and other opportunities to foster equitable advancement in leadership at all levels.

Existing EDI recommendations

Complete the recommendations made in the 2019 report of the AAS Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion in Astronomy Graduate Education.

Implement recommendations of the AIP TEAM-UP report in collaboration with other scientific societies.

Evaluate and implement policies recommended by the Societies Consortium on Sexual Harassment in STEM.

Launch SEA Change certification and obtain significant participation by astronomy departments.

Justice and equity in ethics, policies, and practices

Every five years, or more frequently as needed, review the Anti-Harassment Policy and Code of Ethics and consider modifications as needed to equitably enforce ethical and inclusive behavior within the AAS purview.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

Support astronomy education, professional development, and dissemination of astronomical science.

Goals

1. Promote and support the development, implementation, and reach of AAS Education Committee programs.
2. Support astronomy education and science literacy initiatives, as guided by the relevant task force reports.
3. Enhance opportunities to develop excellence in astronomy education, mentoring, and outreach.
4. Provide professional development opportunities across a variety of career paths chosen by astronomers.
5. Promote high ethical standards and open access for scientific content in journals and all AAS publications.

Actions

Staff support

Obtain sufficient staffing capacity and expertise at the AAS office to support the Education Committee and existing and potential new education initiatives.

Task force recommendations

Act on and assess implementation of the recommendations of the AAS Education Task Force.

Act on the recommendations of the Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion in Astronomy Graduate Education.

Strengthen education-related partnerships with other professional societies and AAS committees.

Support the development and dissemination of research-based strategies to improve the education and retention of undergraduate astronomy majors.

Professional development for education, mentoring, and outreach

Support and promote communication between astronomy educators through the education blog.

Support mini-grants for educational conferences and workshops.

Provide workshops on topics including ethics, EDI, inclusive teaching, and mentorship.

Career resources, development, and support

Provide professional skill development opportunities throughout the year.

Provide support and mentorship across career levels and types.

Journals and publications

Improve the premier quality of the Society's publishing enterprise in the dynamical context of the international publishing environment, particularly with respect to evolution toward an open access model.

Ensure authors and readers have access to AAS journals and publications.

Provide training for referees and authors.

Investigate the impact of double anonymous review on the quality and timeliness of AAS publications.

Explore ways to use *Sky & Telescope* to support introductory astronomy courses and astronomy educators.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4

Cultivate our network of partnerships within the AAS and with related organizations.

Goals

1. Expand and broaden the AAS membership.
2. Create and sustain an engaged member community.
3. Increase volunteer participation in AAS work.
4. Maintain strong interactions and collaborations with astronomy-related organizations, advocates, and the public to deepen relevance and maximize impact on common efforts.

Actions

New AAS members

Clearly define and advocate for the advantages of being an AAS member, using AAS values (e.g. publication access as author and reader, meeting access as attendee/ presenter/ exhibitor and learning from cross-connecting with other fields).

Prepare and maintain marketing materials (in various formats) that articulate the value of AAS membership and highlight the positive reasons for new categories such as science journalists, astronomy clubs.

Create clear pathways for new members to establish research/professional/social networks within the AAS community.

Member engagement

Provide funding support for member-led programs and make an option to donate to special AAS programs more obvious to members.

Increase marketing for larger voter turnout.

Volunteer participation

Ensure that a member who is interested in volunteering can easily find out what is available, and how to participate.

Evaluate current expectations for volunteer leadership at all levels to ensure that leaders are provided adequate support for their work.

Optimize the value of the AAS volunteer programs.

Have an annual reception to express appreciation of volunteers and consider reduced membership fees or other recognition.

Interactions and partnerships

Use the AAS-Sky & Telescope connection to share AAS news and cultivate and expand the AAS Amateur Affiliate Member category.

Strengthen connections between AAS committees

Strengthen existing connections and build new ones with private foundations to fund AAS initiatives.

Strengthen the liaisons between Trustee/members with partner organizations and have reports on their relationships.

Establish systems and processes that enable effective coordination with amateurs, educators, and astronomy clubs by convening leaders in the amateur community for discussions and consider establishing separate, virtual, or add-on days to our meetings for these groups.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5

Improve transparency and efficiency within the AAS.

Goals

1. Create structures for clear and open communication so the ideas and concerns of members are heard and considered by the Society leaders.
2. Establish documentation and training material so volunteers at all levels know how to work within the governance structure and committees.
3. Enhance the understanding of the roles and information flow between the Board of Trustees, Divisions, and Strategic Assembly.
4. Assess the efficiency of the current governance to make best use of the limited time of volunteers.
5. Enhance the effectiveness of AAS meetings.

Actions

Transparency and communication

Become more effective at communicating AAS accomplishments and receiving member feedback by establishing processes such as increasing volunteer-authored content in AAS Digest.

Collaboratively develop and publish standard operating

procedures for committees, working groups, and task forces.

AAS Agents

Revitalize the AAS Agents as an effective force to engage volunteers by establishing metrics to assess success for AAS Agents, reviewing the current leadership structure, working with Agents to determine what they need to be effective, establishing a reward and recognition program for Agents.

Effective governance

Establish processes and metrics to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of society governance.

Develop and publish uniform BoT-led training and onboarding processes for Division and Committee members and chairs and establish processes to keep these materials current.

Assess whether the BoT is properly sized.

Periodically assess BoT functionality (through BoT self-assessments).

Effective meetings

Maximize the benefit of AAS meetings for all AAS members by balancing the advantages of virtual and in-person meetings.

