

Pamela Gay: Candidate for Nominating Committee

Affiliation: Planetary Science Institute

Position/Title: Senior Education and Communication Specialist
and Senior Scientist

PhD institution: University of Texas at Austin, 2002

Areas of scientific interest:

Citizen Science coupled with Machine Learning for image analysis; Photometry of Variable Stars; Photometry of Small Bodies; Software development

AAS and/or Division leadership positions and dates:

- Member, 2009 – 2012, Chambliss Amateur Achievement Award Committee

Other relevant positions, experience, and dates:

- Council Member, 2005 – 2011, American Association of Variable Star Observers (AAVSO)
Also chaired the education committee
- Board Member, 2014 – 2016, Astronomical Society of the Pacific
- Co-chair, 2012 – 2015, Division 55 Working Group for New Media, International Astronomical Union
- Officer, 2015 – 2018, Division C, International Astronomical Union

Statement:

Throughout my career, like so many of us, I've found myself working everywhere a diversity of places, ranging from Harvard to a small state university. Today, I'm a senior scientist and soft money researcher at the Planetary Science Institute. With each change in venue and funding, I've come to appreciate that there is no such thing as a standard astronomy position, and with each new job we must adapt to a new set of struggles and benefits.

As a member of the AAS nominating committee, my focus would be on making sure our society officers represent the diversity of our society's membership, both in terms of institutional diversity, and diversity of background as individuals.



Astronomy has a storied history of bias against those who aren't made from the same template of genetics and gender. Those of us who are women, people of color, queer, disabled or some combination of all the above face additional challenges that must be addressed for myriad reasons, not the least of which is making sure the next rising star isn't ejected from the field by bias before realizing their full potential. While attempts to move beyond these biases are taking hold in various places, it is still the early days. To keep moving forward, we must create within our profession leadership that represents the future we want for the field, and not just the reality of today's senior ranks.

I will also bring to AAS the opinions and experiences of a digital native who can highlight new ways to approach collaborating, committee work, and conferences from a greener, more digital perspective. Learning how to be effective in a world with less travel is going to be really hard on our highly distributed field, and the more of us look to try new remote ways of working, the more we can learn from each other, and work to raise the skills of our entire community in this area.

Bottomline: I want to be on the nominating committee to assure that our future leadership represents what our society aspires to be and reflects the diversity of our membership. Along with that passion, I bring a side of online communications and collaboration experience and a desire to see all of us being more effective when we must work together while spread apart.