

Rolf M. Danner

Candidate for Nominating Committee

Affiliation: Jet Propulsion Laboratory/California Institute of Technology

Position/Title: Manager

PhD institution: Technical University of Munich, 1996

Areas of scientific interest:

- X-ray emission from compact objects
- Exoplanets
- Proposal writing
- Developing and measuring the effectiveness of practices for an inclusive, diverse, equitable and accessible environment for research and development
- Please see my ORC ID record for a complete list: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-1849-7951>



AAS and/or Division leadership positions and dates:

- Co-Chair, Committee for Sexual-Orientation and Gender Minorities in Astronomy (SGMA), 2022 – present
- Member, AAS Task Force on Green Astronomy, 2021 – present
- Member, Strategic Assembly Subcommittee to finalize the draft of the AAS Strategic Plan, 2021
- Chair, Committee for Sexual-Orientation and Gender Minorities in Astronomy, 2020 – 2022
- Founding member, Working Group for Gay and Lesbian Equality, 2012 – 2015
- Co-author of a proposal to the AAS to establish the Working Group for Gay and Lesbian Equality, 2011

Other relevant positions, experience, and dates:

- Manager, Proposal Office, JPL/Caltech, 2018 – present
- Capture Lead and Proposal Manager, JPL/Caltech, 2014 – 2018
- Marketing Manager Civil Space, Senior Scientist, Northrop Grumman Aerospace Systems, 2004 – 2014
- Outreach Scientist, Exoplanet Exploration Program, JPL/Caltech, 1998 – 2004

Statement:

As a gay man, immigrant, and an astronomer who hasn't written a research paper in decades, I have often found myself standing in the in-between spaces. Between countries, languages, and professional identities. I asked myself, where was my professional home? I struggled with this and wished that I could be one thing instead of many. But over time, I have come to accept that it takes not one but many roles to meet the challenges of my life. I need to be a husband, brother, uncle, foster parent, friend, bearer of bad news, manager, innovator, listener, mentor, leader. And I made my home where I could.

The main objective of my work at JPL is to help other researchers get their projects funded. In this work I am reminded every day that it takes the dedicated efforts of many to lift up one outstanding individual to the benefit of all. It is this appreciation for all the contributors required for the scientific enterprise that has me interested in standing for election to the AAS Nominations Committee. I want the candidate pool for election to be as diverse and rich as the AAS membership is today and what I hope it will be tomorrow.

Our society is changing and I have been challenged to respond to this change when I became chair of SGMA after being away from the committee for several years. In those short years the LGBTQIA+ community within the AAS had evolved from where I had found it when I first attended AAS meetings in the 1990s. The focus had shifted from sexual orientation to gender identity and gender expressions. As a cisgender man, I no longer could rely on my own experience and advocate for what I needed. At first, I wondered whether I still had something to offer. Then I remembered that my role was to listen and to use my privilege to highlight the voices of others. Eventually, this led to restructuring SGMA so it was represented by two co-chairs instead of a single chair. We introduced rotating meeting facilitators to give every member leadership experience and started to anonymize committee member applications prior to reviewing them. None of these ideas were mine. They were all ideas of others waiting to be heard. These changes have led to a very active and engaged committee that I am proud to represent.

I would like to bring my experience to the Nominating committee to make the AAS leadership not only a reflection of the entire AAS membership, but to ensure that the AAS continues to be the professional home for all of us. Now and in the future.