

Charles Liu

Candidate for Vice President

Affiliation: CUNY College of Staten Island

Position/Title: Professor

PhD institution: University of Arizona, 1996

Areas of scientific interest:

Galaxy Evolution, AGN, Star Formation History of the Universe



AAS and/or Division leadership positions and dates:

- Chair, Education Committee, American Astronomical Society, 2017 – 2018
- Education Officer, AAS Council (now Board of Trustees) American Astronomical Society, 2015 – 2017
- Member, Education Prize Selection Committee, American Astronomical Society, 2013 – 2014
- Member, Astronomy Education Board, American Astronomical Society, 2012 – 2015
- Member, Committee on the Status of Minorities in Astronomy (CSMA), American Astronomical Society, 2003 – 2008

Other relevant positions, experience, and dates:

- President, Astronomical Society of New York, 2016 – present
- Member, Vera Rubin Observatory Science Advisory Committee, 2016 – present
- Associate, Department of Astrophysics and Hayden Planetarium, American Museum of Natural History, 2003 – present

Statement:

The world is on fire! Our futures - in astronomy and in general - seem shakier than ever. Nobody could be blamed for hunkering down, staying safe, and not joining or committing to anything, including a professional academic society. So why, I had to ask myself, should I accept the AAS Nominating Committee's invitation to be a candidate for vice president?

After long contemplation and lots of conversation, I found an answer. A strong, passionate, and loving community is exactly what we need in this (or any) fragile time. The dedicated officers and staff of the AAS have stepped forward to fight for all of us - not just to protect us against attacks from without, but also to acknowledge our shortcomings to improve our field from within. For a long time, the mission of the AAS was "to enhance and share humanity's scientific understanding of the universe"; then a few years ago, these powerful words were appended:

"...as a diverse and inclusive astronomical community." I've spent decades devoting most of my professional efforts to the first part; if I receive the honor of serving as your vice president, that second part is where, for the next three years, I want to contribute most.

I'm fully aware that the AAS vice presidents must shoulder a huge amount of work and responsibility; and having been both an honors college director and a department chair for many years at my urban public university, I'm no stranger to organizational and administrative work. As VP, while doing all that'd be required in that respect, I would focus my energy promoting the Society's values - welcoming people of all kinds into astronomy, especially those who haven't felt welcome before; updating our systems and infrastructure so that we all can thrive, while making a positive impact on our environment; and mentoring and supporting our early career members, while behaving ethically and transparently as a field.

Sometimes, mission and vision statements are just words. For us, they're not. AAS 247 in Phoenix this January affirmed my optimism, as more than 2,500 people - including, happily, so many students! - gathered, even amid all the troubles and uncertainty in the world, to participate in this endeavor we call astronomy. I felt the joy of discovery fused with the warmth of community; I saw how far we've come since I attended my first AAS meeting a third of a century ago; and I realized how much good can come from belonging to a vital and vibrant Society whose leadership means what it says. We still need to keep getting better - we always will - and I want to contribute to that ongoing effort.

Regardless of the outcome of this election, I welcome the opportunity to connect with any and all of you. I want to hear what we can do together to make our astronomical community what we want and need it to be. Let's have those conversations! Thank you so much.