

Karen Masters

Candidate for Vice President

Affiliation: Haverford College

Position/Title: Professor of Astronomy and Physics

PhD institution: Cornell University, 2005

Areas of scientific interest:

Galaxy morphology and evolution, disk galaxy structures (spirals, bars etc.), cold gas (HI) content in galaxies, optical and radio surveys.



AAS and/or Division leadership positions and dates:

- Member, EMI Subcommittee of the Committee for the Protection of Astronomy and the Space Environment (COMPASSE), American Astronomical Society, 2024 – present
- Chair, 2025, and Member, 2024 – present, Annie Jump Cannon Prize Selection Committee, American Astronomical Society
- Co-Chair, 2021 – 2024, and Member, 2019 – 2024, Education Committee, American Astronomical Society
- AAS Representative to Phys/Astro SEACChange Board, 2021 – 2022
- Member, Nominating Committee, American Astronomical Society, 2020 - 2021

Other relevant positions, experience, and dates:

- Co-Chair, 2025 – 2027, and Member, 2020 – present, Committee on Radio Frequencies (CORF) of the National Academies of Sciences
- Member, Roman Science Users Panel, 2026 – present
- Member, Physics Cluster, Committee on Sciences & the Arts, Franklin Institute, 2023 – present
- Project Scientist, 2013 – 2021, and PI, 2021 – present, Galaxy Zoo
- Chair, 2023, and Member, 2007 – 2010; 2021 – 2025, NRAO/GBT Users Committee
- Director, Koshland Integrated Natural Sciences Center, Haverford College, 2021 – 2024
- Member Academic Council, Haverford College, 2022 – 2024; elected position
- Spokesperson SDSS-IV, 2016 – 2022; elected position. In phase IV, SDSS had over 200 collaboration members in more than 30 institutions worldwide. This role involved organising the scientific program of annual collaboration meetings (among other duties).

Statement:

I was delighted to be nominated to stand for election as a Vice President of the American Astronomical Society this year, and I would be honored if you choose to elect me. I believe that my background and leadership experiences across a range of astronomical organizations, both large and small (including in a variety of AAS Committees) have provided me with the skills required to carry out the responsibilities of this role.

I have been a member of the AAS since around 2000, and recall attending my first meeting as a young graduate student at Cornell University as the first time I had ever seen so many astronomers in one place. I remember the joy and excitement in being able to listen to the latest astronomical research in sessions both large and small, and to marvel at the vast numbers of research posters and learn about all the latest technologies and observatories in the exhibit hall. In recent years, I have had the pleasure to mentor dozens of undergraduates to experience our meetings for the first time, seeing this again through their eyes.

As you can read in the Society Bylaws, the primary role of Vice Presidents is to be responsible for planning the scientific content of these meetings (they also are members of the Board of Trustees, may be asked to work on other activities at the request of the President and/or Board of Trustees).

The AAS strategic plan for 2021-2026 lists our values as "Curiosity, Integrity, Inclusivity, Empowerment and Sustainability". As a Vice President of the AAS I would strive to help plan meeting programs with scientific content which embodies these values. We all know AAS meetings come with challenges. They are too big for most academic institutions, and too small for many conference centers. Providing coffee for thousands of astronomers at once is hard to do. AAS meetings are expensive, and overwhelming, and have a significant environmental impact. But they are also exciting, and provide connection, education and networking and a whole lot of astronomy themed swag. Astronomy has changed a lot in the 127+ years our society has been around, and our meetings need to change too to better suit today's world. It would be my honor to play a small role in shepherding these changes to the future as a Vice President of the AAS.