

Kevin Covey

Candidate for Nominating Committee

Affiliation: Western Washington University

Position/Title: Professor & Dept. Chair

PhD institution: University of Washington, 2006



Areas of scientific interest:

Star formation, stellar angular momentum & magnetic activity, star clusters, optical & infrared spectroscopy, astronomical surveys

AAS and/or Division leadership positions and dates:

- Institutional Agent, American Astronomical Society, 2014 – 2016
- Member, Committee on the Status of Minorities in Astronomy (CSMA), American Astronomical Society, 2010 – 2014

Other relevant positions, experience, and dates:

- Chair, Department of Physics & Astronomy, Western Washington University, 2022 - present
- SDSS-V Multi-Object Spectrograph Survey Coordinator, 2019 - 2023
- SDSS-IV APOGEE-2 Special Projects Coordinator, 2014 – 2020
- Chair, Equity, Inclusion & Diversity Committee, College of Science & Engineering, Western Washington University, 2018 – 2020
- Member & Finance Steward, Social Justice & Equity Committee, Western Washington University, 2016 – 2019
- Member, Equity, Inclusion & Diversity Committee, College of Science & Engineering, Western Washington University, 2017 – 2018
- Chair, Organizing Committee, Northwest Astronomers Meeting, 2016 – 2018
- Co-Chair, Star Clusters Working Group, LSST Science Collaboration, 2013 – 2018
- Member, Astro Section Organizing Committee, National Society of Black Physicists, 2007 – 2016
- Member, Scientific Organizing Committee, Cool Stars 18 Scientific Conference, 2013 – 2014
- Member, NASA Infrared Telescope Facility Time Allocation Committee, 2012 – 2014
- Co-Chair, LSST Stellar Populations Science Collaboration, 2009 – 2013

Statement:

The Nominating Committee cultivates slates of talented and committed candidates for the AAS's Officer, Trustee, and committee positions. The committee supports the AAS' mission by helping the membership select leaders who will effectively advocate for our science and advance the health and values of our profession. By ensuring that each election offers multiple qualified candidates, the committee also helps empower elected leaders with a clear mandate for their vision and approach, which the membership has carefully considered and endorsed.

This work is always important, but feels especially urgent now. Funding streams and enrollments are changing quickly, creating uncertainty for projects and institutions of all sizes. The value of scientific expertise is increasingly questioned by politicians and public figures, fostering a climate of hostility to science and scientists. The AAS is fortunate to have, and will continue to need, officers, trustees and committees who are pro-active and clear-eyed. They will also need to stay closely connected with the Society's membership, to quickly and nimbly address our collective needs, concerns and emerging threats.

As a member of the nominating committee, I will strive to be similarly proactive in identifying and recruiting strong slates of candidates that represent the full diversity of our field. The evidence is clear, within astronomy and from broader studies of group dynamics: diverse and inclusive teams make sounder decisions, and produce more creative and impactful science results. The AAS will be more effective and responsive if our nominees represent the membership's full range of research interests, professional roles, and institutional contexts. The Society will also be strengthened by a diverse leadership team with a broad range of personal backgrounds and identities: the wealth of expertise and perspective that this diversity offers will inform the society's strategic decisions, and contribute to a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere that will grow and strengthen the AAS into the future.

In this work, I would draw on knowledge gained from my work in various institutional settings, and with colleagues across a range of disciplines and backgrounds. During my career, I have worked at large and small research institutes, public and private R1 research universities, and now at a public regional comprehensive university. I've also worked closely with colleagues across a broad range of expertise - astronomers, physicists, instrument scientists, software engineers, and administrators - on projects spanning institutional and national boundaries. These experiences have taught me that there is no single model for scientific excellence and leadership: leaders are present and vital in all these settings, with varied personal and professional backgrounds, and succeed through clear communication and shared values among well-organized teams.

I would be honored to contribute to the nominating committee's important work. In that role, I will solicit input broadly and intentionally, listen carefully, and work to nominate a diverse slate of candidates whose leadership and vision will sustain and strengthen the AAS, and our field more broadly.