



Charter Of The SEA Change Physics / Astronomy Committee

26 March 2024

I. PURPOSE

SEA Change (STEMM Equity Achievement Change) challenges, supports, and recognizes institutions of higher education and their departments/schools as they take decisive actions to remove systemic, structural barriers for underrepresented, non-white men, all women, and people outside of the gender binary with a clear aim: to enable the full diversity of talented individuals to pursue, persist and succeed in science, technology, engineering, medicine and mathematics (STEMM) higher education (at all levels) and in their careers. Structural, systemic change is needed to realize this aim. SEA Change will enhance diversity and equity at institutions of higher education by changing support structures and systems, including those for designing, executing, evaluating outcomes of, and continuously improving individual programs and projects.

The SEA Change Physics / Astronomy Committee (the “Committee”) is responsible for the design and initial implementation of the SEA Change program for Departments of Physics and Astronomy within the United States.

II. ROLE OF COMMITTEE

The SEA Change Physics/Astronomy Committee is the decision-making body of the SEA Change Physics and Astronomy departmental SEA Change program. The Committee is responsible for establishing, implementing and revising, when needed, the criteria for the departmental assessment process and the review processes for evaluating departmental action plans. It is responsible for ensuring the financial viability and sustainability of the program and works toward the overall success of the project: a substantial fraction of the physics and astronomy departments in the U.S. engaging in the SEA Change program via programmatic offerings. Furthermore, the Committee has oversight responsibilities of the physics and astronomy departmental SEA Change program to ensure high standards and consistency.

III. PRINCIPLES OF OPERATION

The Committee agrees to be guided by the AAAS SEA Change principles as outlined in Appendix A. The Committee commits to ensuring equity and full participation of individuals at institutions of higher education across sex, race, ethnicity, disability status, socioeconomic status, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, familial history of higher education, and any other factors that research has indicated as being associated with bias and inequitable treatment. If the AAAS SEA Change principles change, the Committee will make a consensus decision as to whether to abide by the new principles.



IV. COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE

A. Composition

The Committee will be composed of Members, one of whom is the Chair. Committee Members will be appointed by any Professional Society that engages faculty in physics or astronomy departments in the U.S. Each Society can appoint up to two representatives. The Committee will use a consensus process to invite additional Professional Societies beyond the societies listed in Appendix B.

Because the AAAS leads the institutional SEA Change program, a representative of AAAS will be invited to attend relevant Committee meetings as an observer. Societies may request guests with relevant expertise to attend meetings or to serve on the Committee in an ex-officio role.

B. Appointment and Replacement

The Members of the Committee, sometimes referred to as “Reps”, will be appointed by the participating Society’s highest ranked staff or volunteer leader (e.g., CEO, President). The Members of the Committee shall serve a term of two years and may be reappointed to serve additional two-year terms. There is no limit on appointments. The terms will be staggered.

Each term begins at the start of the calendar year, regardless of whether the Member is appointed after the calendar year begins. Members who take the place of another Member will complete the original Member’s term. For Members whose affiliation changes during the term (e.g., their position changes with the Society they represent), the Director will contact the highest ranked staff or volunteer leader who will decide on the Committee Member representing their Society.

C. Members of the Committee (“Members”)

Members are acting as representatives of the Society that appointed them. Each Society determines who will serve as Members and can select from volunteers or staff. Members. The P/A SEA Change Director will provide some guidance to each Society but does not decide on the Members.

A Member’s responsibilities include but are not limited to the following:

1. Voting on whether departments will receive a Bronze, Silver, or Gold SEA Change Award
2. Providing input and advice regarding the program’s operations, either in subcommittees or in meetings
3. When possible, identifying resources and opportunities within their Society that would support the program (e.g., promoting and advertising, suggesting reviewers)

C. Chair of the Committee

1. The Chair is appointed to serve a two-year (renewable) term by consensus of the Committee.
2. The Chair is responsible for (or assigning the duty to another):
 - a. Approving the agenda before sending to the Members
 - b. Chairing Committee meetings, including
 - i. Serving as a timekeeper
 - ii. Identifying decisions and action items
 - c. Working with the Director to ensure the success of the program’s activities



3. The Chair serves as a point of contact with the AAAS SEA Change program

D. Director of P/A SEA Change

The Director is responsible for the program's daily and long-term operations. These responsibilities include:

1. Creating a program that fulfills P/A SEA Change's purpose. Examples include:
 - a. Supporting the departments in the program
 - b. Evaluating and revising the program's operations
 - c. Generating awareness and value of this program for physics and astronomy
2. Engaging the Members and their Societies. Examples include:
 - a. Facilitating communications among Committee Members and AAAS SEA Change
 - b. Managing and ensuring completion of tasks related to the program
 - c. Facilitating equitable participation of the Societies
 - d. When possible, developing mutual means of supporting P/A SEA Change and individual Societies
3. Facilitating communication and engagement with the broader physics and astronomy communities regarding P/A SEA Change. Examples include:
 - a. Communicating progress and opportunities in public facing documents. Examples include:
 - i. Providing public-facing information through a website with information about the Committee, which includes, at a minimum, a list of Committee Members and participating societies as well as this charter
 - b. Involving and interacting with the broader community when possible (e.g., review panels, talks).

E. Institutional withdrawal

An organization can withdraw from the Committee by informing the Committee in writing; all Committee Members will be informed of the departure of any participating organization.

V. MEETINGS

A. Frequency

The Committee shall meet as necessary to fulfill its purpose. Meetings may occur in-person, via teleconference, or other means as approved by consensus of the Committee.

- The Committee will meet on a regular basis and no less than quarterly
- Meeting times will be communicated at least two weeks in advance of the meeting

B. Invitees

The Committee may invite to its meetings any persons whom it deems appropriate to consult to fulfill its purpose. Decisions to invite individuals are made by consensus of the Committee.

C. Agendas

Agendas will include:

- Date and time of meeting



- Review of minutes of the previous meeting, which includes
- Names of Members in attendance
- Notes of discussions and action items from the meeting
- A list of open Action Items, and the person responsible for taking each action
- Items requested for discussion by Committee Members
- A “Parking Lot” for agenda items that have been tabled for future discussions
- Minutes will be recorded in a commonly accessible format (e.g., Google Docs) for all Members to view.

D. Reporting

An annual report of the Committee activities suitable for informing the governing bodies of each of its constituent organizations will be prepared.

E. Action by the Committee

At all meetings of the Committee, all decisions must be made by consensus¹ including, for example, the allocation of resources, seeking external funding, and entering into contracts. Consensus in this context means agreement by the appointed Member of each participating Society. Consensus does not mean the decision is unanimous but instead means the decision is one that everyone comes to agreement with. That is, the decision is based on whether the choice is one that everyone is willing to agree to in order to align with the group’s wishes. It is not necessarily the preference of everyone but one that everyone can live with.

Decisions regarding allocation of or intended use of resources from Committee Members’ societies must be consistent with the intended purpose and receive approval from the Member’s society for the requested purpose. Furthermore, the Committee may decline resources if the proposed uses do not fit within the mission of the program.

Additional considerations for decision-making:

- Any Member of the Committee can propose a motion at any time.
- Decisions are posted by email to the group following any meeting by the Chair of the Committee.
- Any Society not present during the meeting that the decision was made has one week after the email is sent to weigh in after the meeting, unless a request is made within that one-week timeframe to delay a decision; delays can be for any reason, but are generally for further consideration of an issue, raise concerns, or to bring in other viewpoints or information.
- If a Society formally requests reconsideration of a decision within that one-week timeframe, the issue will be put on a future agenda for reconsideration.

After the one-week time period has passed and in the absence of any request for a delay, a decision will be considered official.

¹ Consensus decisions will be made using the [Seeds of Change](#) consensus decision making model.

F. Recusals and Conflict of Interest

Members of the Committee or Societies shall abstain from discussion and consensus decisions where there is a Conflict of Interest, as self-identified or recognized by Members. The decision as to whether there is a Conflict of Interest or how to navigate around a potential conflict of interest is made by consensus of the Committee. Such decisions include determining whether to award a department and activities or operations of P/A SEA Change.

P/A SEA Change based their definition of a Conflict of Interest on the NSF [manual](#) and regarding Conflicts of Interest and Ethical Behaviors and [reviewer guidance](#) on Conflicts of Interest. Conflicts of Interest include but are not limited to:

- Financial stake or interest in an outcome
- Holding a paid position in an institution
- Serving in a governing position within an institution (e.g., on a Board of Directors)
- Disagreements among entities
- Relationships, including familial and other personal relationships, that would impair one's ability to make a fair judgment
- Other factors that may jeopardize the integrity of decisions and cast doubt on impartiality

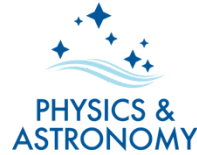
Members should bring up potential or known Conflicts of Interest to the Director or the Chair as soon as possible. If a Member refuses to abstain from discussion and decisions after the Committee reaches consensus that a Conflict of Interest exists, the Member can be removed from the Committee. Removal is agreed upon via consensus.

The Director and Chair shall also abstain from discussion where there is a Conflict of Interest, self-identified or recognized by the Members. How to handle a potential or existing Conflict of Interest is made by consensus of the Committee. If the Chair refuses to abstain from discussion and decisions after the Committee reaches consensus that a Conflict of Interest exists, the Chair can be removed from the Committee. Removal is agreed upon via consensus. If the Director refuses to abstain from discussion and decisions after the Committee reaches consensus that a Conflict of Interest exists, the Director can be terminated from their position. Termination is determined by the Chair..

G. Conduct during Meetings

Conduct of Members during meetings shall follow these guidelines:

- Act in the best interest of *the program*
 - *Represent your Society, not personal agendas, and make decisions based on the merits of the issues*
- Share the time equitably
 - *Know yourself, balance your listening and talking*
- Value differences
 - *Remember that your perspective is not the only one*
- Own your impact
 - *Your intentions may not be the same as your impact*
- Make sure everyone feels safe



- o Safe is not the same as comfortable*
- Discomfort is okay
 - o Learning occurs at the edge of your comfort zone*
- Argue using evidence
 - o Back what you have to say with data*
- Be prepared to intervene
 - o All participants have a responsibility to maintain civility*

VI. SUB- AND AD HOC COMMITTEES

The Committee shall have three subcommittees that support the creation and implementation of the program. These are:

1. Application and Awards Subcommittee, which is focused on ensuring that the awarding process is fair to a diversity of departments. They advise the awarding process including review and cohort creation.
2. Implementation Subcommittee, which is focused on ensuring that awarded departments complete their action plans. They advise the processes and mechanisms departments and the P/A SEA Change Committee follow so that the departments are supported and the action plans are completed.
3. Sustainability Subcommittee, which is focused on ensuring that the program is able to operate indefinitely. They advise areas such as financial aspects, the value for departments and the physics/astronomy discipline, and the volunteer experience.

Subcommittees create plans, policies, or proposals within their stated purview for the Committee to consider. The Subcommittees autonomous how they work. Unless otherwise agreed upon, the Committee shall come to consensus regarding any Subcommittee plans, policies, or proposals.

Committee Members can propose new sub or ad hoc committees when emergent needs are identified, as well as propose to dissolve current subcommittees. All proposals regarding the creation or dissolution of sub or ad hoc committees will need a consensus of the Members.

VII. RE- EVALUATION OF CHARTER

The Committee shall review and reassess annually or as needed the adequacy of this Charter and make changes as deemed necessary or valuable. The Committee shall conduct such reviews and reassessments in whatever manner it deems appropriate. This Charter can be modified by two successive consensus decisions of the Committee, separated by no fewer than 4 weeks.

VIII. WITHDRAWAL OR DISSOLUTION

The Committee can be disbanded by a consensus of the Members.



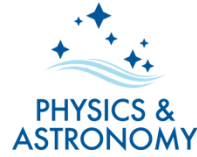
Appendix A
AAAS SEA Change Principles
October 26, 2019

Participating in the SEA Change self-assessment process is a commitment to the SEA Change Principles:

STEMM Equity Achievement (SEA) Change supports institutional transformation, with an initial focus on colleges and universities, enabling success in high quality education and research missions by ensuring that the full range of individual talent can be recruited, retained, and advanced in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine (STEMM).

By joining SEA Change, an institution commits to equity and full participation of each individual across gender (including gender, gender identity, and gender expression), race, ethnicity, disability status, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, age, familial history of higher education, and any other factor that is unrelated to ability and has been the target of bias and unequal treatment. Bias, marginalization, and exclusion have prevented the full engagement of a broad range of individuals that is needed to maximize creativity and quality, as well as the full engagement of the promise of available talent, in STEMM education and careers.

- We believe colleges and universities cannot reach their full potential to contribute to all students and the larger society unless they can include, engage, and benefit from the talents of broadly diverse groups of students, faculty, and others in their communities.
- We believe the role of higher education systems is to serve all who are interested, committed, and have promise; we aspire to provide an inclusive culture of learning and respect, overcoming stereotypes and addressing biases.
- We believe that advancing equity requires dedication and action from all levels of the organization, including supportive central and local governance and accountability structures and active leadership from those in senior roles; institutional leaders commit themselves to take action to inspire and foster commitment of others across the institution, accordingly.
- We recognize the long-term commitment and important contributions of institutions whose historical missions are to serve specific populations of students historically excluded from academic opportunities available to others.
- We acknowledge that all individuals have multiple individual identities, and we commit to considering the intersection of those identities whenever possible.
- We also acknowledge that every individual experiences identity differently and is unique; membership in a group does not mean acceptance of the idea of homogeneity within that group. Heterogeneous groups reinforce the need to build structures that affirm the support of person-centered policies and reject society's stereotyping and structural inequity.



- We aspire to remove the additional systemic and structural barriers and obstacles that compound the usual challenges in higher education facing everyone and are statistically more likely to be faced by individuals from groups that are affected by inequity at major points of educational, professional, and career development and progression.
- We aspire to shift institutional culture and climate, ensuring that regardless of demographic and identity characteristics unrelated to potential and performance in STEMM, individuals are respected and enabled to be productive and to contribute to the advancement and application of knowledge.
- We aspire to develop solutions to inequity that build upon organizational governance and accountability structures and systems at the central and local level, including metrics and evidence-based evaluation, standards, policies, processes, and roles and responsibilities transcending individuals employed at a particular time.
- We aspire for solutions to inequity to involve collaboration of those who are targets of inequity and those who are not, knowing that the burden of change should not rest on individuals experiencing barriers that stem from those inequities. The cost of participation by those with identities targeted by bias should be recognized and addressed equitably.
- We commit to embracing equity, diversity, and inclusion as central elements of excellence in academia, business, and industry; we recognize that high performance results from the inclusion of all committed individuals of promise, and that STEMM excellence requires programs, policies, and practices that support a welcoming and professional climate and culture for inclusion of all.
- We commit to addressing the current structural and systemic inequities affecting different populations and groups across STEMM disciplines, particularly barriers that result in the absence or near-absence of diversity within student bodies and senior academic and professional roles, as well as in business and industry.
- We commit to identifying and aspire to addressing both explicit and implicit biases that lead to exclusionary conduct and perpetuate structures and systems of inequity across our institution, and we understand that such conduct is a barrier to enhancing excellence.
- We commit to building a community that is actively intolerant of exclusionary conduct and that establishes standards of excellence requiring both high quality work and professional conduct (which by definition is intolerant of exclusionary practices).
- We commit to using organizational structures and systems, including related resource allocation, to support better design, evaluation, and continuous improvement of those structures and systems—as well as of transactional strategies (individual programs and



projects) aimed at enhancing diversity and inclusion—to make the structures, systems, and strategies more effective and sustainable.

Note: The phrase “inequities affecting or targeting some populations” is used across the principles to denote that often, even if certain groups are well-represented, they are still not being equitably served or fully included due to bias, stereotype, and marginalization.



Appendix B
Participating Societies
14 February 2024

American Association of Physics Teachers
American Astronomical Society
American Institute of Physics
American Association of Physicists in Medicine
American Physical Society
American Vacuum Society
Council on Undergraduate Research - Physics & Astronomy Division
National Society of Black Physicists
National Society of Hispanic Physicists
Optica
Society of Physics Students