



AURA US Memberships Application Process

Date: 14 March 2018

Preface

The Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy (AURA) is a consortium of 44 US institutions and 4 international affiliates that operates world-class astronomical observatories. AURA's role is to establish, nurture, and promote public observatories and facilities that advance innovative astronomical research. In addition, AURA is deeply committed to public and educational outreach, and to diversity throughout the astronomical and scientific workforce. AURA carries out its role through its astronomical facilities.

AURA's Board of Directors establishes guidelines¹ (described in the next section) for institutional membership because of the important role played by the Member Representatives (hereafter "Member Reps") from AURA Member Institutions: the Member Reps elect the individuals who serve on AURA's Board of Directors and Management Councils.

AURA's Mission

Promote excellence in astronomical research
by providing access to information about the universe
from state-of-the-art facilities, surveys, and archives

¹ *The AURA Board of Directors adopted these guidelines for institutional membership on May 7, 2017.*

Guideline Qualifications

Membership in AURA is by invitation of the AURA President. The President of each Member Institution designates a Member Representative who has a voice in AURA matters. Together, the Member Representatives act upon membership applications.

1. The applicant institution should demonstrate that it has been successful in promoting astronomy in its own institution as evidenced by the quality, scope, and effectiveness of its astronomy program according to the guidelines below.

a. All Applicants

- i. A staff of five or more faculty or equivalent; and
- ii. A research program that, on assessment of its quality and effectiveness, would place the applicant among the ranking of current AURA members.

b. PhD-granting University

- i. A graduate program leading to a doctorate in astronomy, astrophysics, or related studies; and
- ii. An average of one or more doctorates awarded per year over a five-year period; and
- iii. Activities which further access to research and education in astronomy and astrophysics among undergraduate and graduate students, such as programs to promote access to research experiences for undergraduates using AURA facilities.

c. Non-PhD-Granting College or University

- i. An undergraduate and/or graduate program leading to placement in PhD-granting graduate schools in astronomy, astrophysics, or related studies; and
- ii. An average of one or more such placements per year over five years; and
- iii. Activities which further access to research and education in astronomy and astrophysics among undergraduate and graduate students, such as programs to promote access to research experiences for undergraduates using AURA facilities.

d. Consortia of Colleges or Universities

- i. The above guidelines for colleges or universities will apply both to individual institutions and to consortia comprised of such institutions. When a consortium applies for membership in AURA, the consortium as a whole may satisfy the guidelines given above for individual institutions.
- iii. When a consortium joins AURA, it will designate a single point of contact with AURA.
- iv. After a consortium joins AURA, the consortium shall notify AURA of changes in its scope or organization.

e. Other Nonprofit Institutions

- i. Significant contributions to astronomical research through the operation of facilities or sites or through other means; and
- ii. Programs to promote astronomy, for example, through public or private education.

2. The applicant institution or consortium should have demonstrated an involvement in AURA's role and mission in astronomy through:

- a. Publications by faculty or staff, and, if applicable, by students based upon data gathered at AURA facilities; and
- b. Service by faculty or staff on AURA's Board of Directors as Directors-at-Large or on AURA Centers' advisory or review committees, such as visiting, users, telescope time allocation, *etc.*

Application Process

Institutional Membership in AURA (both US and International) is by invitation of the AURA President. Membership applications are evaluated by Member Reps of the current Member Institutions. This takes place via an election during the Annual Meeting held each April.

Expression of Interest

Interested institutions should contact the AURA President or his/her designee.

Submission of Application

At the discretion of the AURA President, an institution may be **invited** to submit an application package. The package should include the following.

1. Cover letter, expressing why the institution is interested in joining AURA and identifying a Key Individual from the applying institution who will shepherd the application process.
2. Letter from an individual with institutional budgetary authority (which may or may not be the same as the Key Individual), indicating that the institution is aware of AURA policies regarding membership, including any fees.
3. Documentation that the institution is in compliance with the guidelines established by the Board of Directors as listed above.
4. Additional documentation the institution deems of interest to AURA Member Reps.

Application package format: 12-pt font, 1-inch margins, less than 15 pages.

Applications received after 1 March will likely not get consideration in the April meeting, and thus would be delayed to the subsequent year.

Review of Application

By mid March, the AURA President (or someone designated by the AURA President) will review the package to ensure the application package is complete and the institution is compliant with guidelines. If the package is complete and compliant, the Key Individual will be asked to review a short presentation for the AURA's Member Representatives. The presentation (which will be no more than 8 slides and will be generated by AURA based on the application package) will establish the institution's compliance with the member guidelines, as well as other items of relevance. Confirmation of approval of the package should be provided to AURA by 1 April.

Presentation of Application to AURA Member Representatives

At AURA's Annual Meeting, the AURA President (or someone designated by the AURA President) will present the package to the Member Representatives. Please note that the Key Individual is not present at the Annual meeting due to the possibly sensitive nature of the AURA Member Representative discussion. The Member Representatives will evaluate the package based on the Guidelines, on the recommendation of the AURA President, and primarily in the case of foreign affiliates, strategic value of the Institution to AURA's mission.

If the Member Representatives choose not to accept the application, the Key Individual will be briefed by the AURA President (or someone designated by the AURA President) on next steps, if any.

Selection of a Member Representative from newly-selected Institutions

If the Member Representatives choose to accept the application, the Key Individual will be notified of the decision of the Member Representatives within a week after the Annual Meeting concludes. The AURA President will send a letter of invitation to the President of the Institution, welcoming them to AURA, and requesting that they appoint a Member Representative to send to the AURA Annual Meeting.