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Your Background and Experience

This section of the survey aims to gather information about your expertise in these areas to ensure that our board is equipped with the necessary skills and experience to effectively lead and support our mission. Your responses will help us assess your fit for a potential board role and identify areas where we may need additional training or support.

We don't expect any candidate to have relevant background in all these areas. Please respond to the topics for which you do bring experience, and feel free to skip the others.

Strategic Plan Implementation

The new strategic plan expands AAVSO's mission and goals to encompass all aspects of astronomy where amateur activities (making observations, analyzing data, and educating the public) can contribute to scientific discovery. Our focus is now on implementation, working closely with the Executive Director to enhance current programs and develop new initiatives that will help achieve these goals.

How much experience do you have with strategic planning and implementation?

Moderate Experience: Actively participated.

Please describe your experience and accomplishments in strategic planning and implementation.

As a department chair, associate Dean, and Interim Dean at my former university I was active in numerous planning and implementation initiatives for my department and the university as a whole.

Please discuss your willingness to critically assess the implementation and effectiveness of the Strategic Plan if performance metrics and "gut feel" show that the plan is NOT working? Do you have experience with plans that failed to perform as expected?

Most plans fail to perform as hoped. I have never had difficulty in speaking up.

Governance and Oversight

Governance and Oversight, including policy development, financial oversight, resource allocation, program evaluation.

How much experience do you have in Governance and Oversight?

Advanced Experience: Lead a successful team.

Please describe your experience and accomplishments in the area of governance and oversight.

I served as Chair of the Department of Environmental Science and Engineering at Gannon University (Erie PA) for 18 years. Also, I served as Interim Dean for a semester while a search was underway for a new dean, and for many years as Associate Dean of the College of Engineering and Business at Gannon. I was also, on numerous occasions, appointed by the President or Provost of the university to serve on taskforces, committees, etc. As Chair of my department, I initiated a new degree program in Environmental Engineering, gaining approval through the internal process at the university as well as at the Pennsylvania Department of Education. I then led the multi-year effort to gain accreditation for the degree program from ABET, the national accreditation agency for engineering degree programs.

Advocacy and Public Relations

Including community engagement, campaigns and initiatives, being a spokesperson, event promotion, application of social media, storytelling, media relations, product and organization branding, government agency relations:

How much experience do you have with Advocacy and Public Relations?

Moderate Experience: Actively participated.

Please describe your experience and accomplishments in the area of advocacy and public relations.

As chair of my department, I was responsible for promoting our degree programs both internally and externally. We held regular sessions with the public on topics related to our field of environmental protection and environmental research, and I made numerous presentations to local civic clubs, and was on several occasions interviewed by the local TV and radio stations and local newspaper. I am not a user of 'Social Media' and so claim no expertise in that area.

Fundraising

Including managing fundraising campaigns, soliciting sponsors, cultivating donors, preparing or evaluating grant proposals, building partnerships.

How much experience do you have with Fundraising?

Advanced Experience: Lead a successful team.

Please describe your experience and accomplishments in the area of fundraising.

Over the course of my academic career, I authored a number of grant proposals, many of which were funded (more than \$900,000), some were not. These included both institutional grants as well as research project grants. On several occasions, I served as a panelist for the National Science Foundation in Arlington, VA, and for the US Environmental Protection Agency in Washington, DC, reviewing and ranking proposals by others.

Education and Training

For life-long adult learners will be an important initiative for AAVSO in the next few years (including identification of learning objectives, development of classes/curricula, interaction with colleges/universities and grant agencies, assessment of effectiveness).

How much experience do you have with Education and Training?

Advanced Experience: Lead a successful team.

Please describe your experience and accomplishments in the area of Education and Training.

For most of my adult life, I have been a teacher, for a short while at the secondary level, but mostly at the collegiate level. I taught high school science just out of college, then after a break working for a small business, I returned to graduate school in order to become a college professor. Upon completion of my graduate program at Virginia Tech, I found a tenure track assistant professor position at Gannon University in Erie, PA. I advanced through the ranks and retired as a tenured full Professor. Over many years I taught undergraduates and graduate students, mentoring many of them in their senior or graduate thesis projects. I provided workshops for local business people who were interested in improving their efforts at pollution control and utilization of waste products for the production of biofuels. I was invited by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to provide an eight-week long workshop for employees who were preparing to sit for the Professional Engineering exam (I was a licensed Professional Engineer in Pennsylvania and Virginia).

A major part of gaining and retaining accreditation of an engineering degree is developing and implementing an "Outcomes Assessment Plan" to quantify the achievement of stated student learning outcomes. I, along with other faculty, created such a plan, collected outcomes assessment data, and analyzed and summarized that data over the six year accreditation cycle, and reported on the success of our plan. Our accreditation was renewed each cycle under my leadership with no concerns or deficiencies identified.

Astronomy Research Projects

Identifying and pursuing Astronomy Research projects with Citizen-science activities will be an important initiative for AAVSO in the next few years (including identifying research questions/problems, recruiting participants, organizing and leading teams, defining approaches, forming professional-amateur collaborations, identifying funding needs, evaluating interim results and course-corrections, reaching conclusions, publication).

Please describe your experience and accomplishments in the area of Astronomy Research Projects

I have been a professional scientist most of my adult life in the field of environmental science and engineering, having earned a bachelor's degree in biology, master's degree in environmental engineering, and a Ph.D. in civil engineering. After retirement, to continue to work in that arena was no longer practical, so I began a search for an alternative field in which I could conduct original scientific study. I recalled my early interest in astronomy (from high school days) and put together a backyard telescope system. I then discovered the AAVSO and found a welcoming and supportive community, and became a student all over again. I learned how to do photometry, and contributed a number of observations to the AAVSO's database. I then found myself attracted to the sub-discipline of spectroscopy, where I have focused my efforts these past several years. I have contributed spectra to AVSpec, the BAA spectral database, and the BeSS database. I have given oral presentations on my work at the 2022 Annual Meeting in Tucson, at the 2023 meeting in Somerville, and the 2024 meeting in Huntsville. Most recently, I presented a paper at the June 2025 meeting of the Society for Astronomical Science in Ontario, CA. I contributed papers to the Proceedings of each of those events, and I have had published in the JAAVSO a peer-reviewed paper on my on-going study of the Be star omicron Andromedae.

How much experience do you have with Astronomy research projects

Moderate Experience: Actively participated.

Citizen Science

AAVSO is one of the oldest and most respected Citizen Science organizations in the world. Expanding on this legacy will be an important initiative during the next few years (including engaging participants both within and beyond the AAVSO community, expanding opportunities for collecting new data and for mining existing databases, maintaining primary focus on achieving tangible scientific outcomes, engaging both professional and non-professional participants, maintaining communication among team members).

How much experience do you have with Citizen Science

Moderate Experience: Actively participated.

Please describe your experience and accomplishments in the area of Citizen Science

I think I addressed this in the response above. However, I should also mention that almost three years ago I decided to recruit co-investigators into a comprehensive study of the spectroscopy of a selected small group of Be stars. About a dozen fellow amateur astronomers joined the project and Dr. Richard Gray agreed to provide guidance. I provided supporting materials and previously published literature on Be stars to the group. Our goal was to coordinate observations by observers in Europe as well as North America so as to have long time series of compatible observations on a given night. Each member of the group volunteered to be a lead investigator for a star from a short list of possible targets. It turned out to be too ambitious an undertaking. The weather in Europe that fall and winter was generally poor, and while many of the observers were able to capture observations and upload them to a Google drive we created, we never achieved the desired goal. Some of the participants lost interest, or had competing interests that took priority for them. Some falsely claimed to have expertise in spectroscopy. All was not lost however, as I was able to use my own observations as the beginning of what is now a three-year study of omicron Andromedae's highly variable behavior.

Please describe your experience in areas that are NOT science oriented but might provide insight into promoting effective citizen science. For example, many of the challenges of running an arts organization may feed directly effectively managing and motivating volunteers in a Citizen Science organization.

I have served on a number of boards and oversight committees. A list of such activities:

- Erie Keystone Innovation Zone Advisory Board
- Advisory Board, Cascade Creek Restoration Project
- Chair, Conference Planning Committee, Association of Environmental Engineering and Science Professors
- Director, Northwest (PA) Industrial Resource Council
- Director and Treasurer, Regional Science Consortium at the Tom Ridge Environmental Science Center, Erie, PA
- Presque Isle Bay Public Advisory Committee, member and chair
- Director, Pennsylvania Sea Grant Program

Other skills & experience: What experiences and skills in your background – NOT directly related to the AAVSO – do you think would be valuable for the AAVSO? We need people who bring diverse perspectives and experiences to the organization.

During a break from academics some years ago, I worked in management of a small business. I began coursework in the MBA program at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, VA. Before losing interest in the value of an MBA, I completed graduate level courses in management, accounting, finance, and marketing.

Your current/past involvement with AAVSO

This section of the survey is designed to gather information about your experience with the AAVSO. Understanding your familiarity and involvement with our organization helps us assess your potential contributions as a board member and ensures that we have a diverse

range of perspectives and expertise to guide our mission. Your insights are invaluable in helping us build a stronger, more effective leadership team.

How many years have you been involved with the AAVSO (as a member, a non-member participant, or in other ways)?

about 4 years

Why do you want to serve on the AAVSO Board of Directors?

The AAVSO has a long and valued history of providing service to the astronomical community, and I would like to contribute to its success. I believe that my experience in academic administration combined with my business experience would be of value.

What are your current and past activities involving AAVSO?

I have contributed observations, both photometric and spectroscopic. I complete one CHOICE course. I have been a speaker at every annual meeting since I joined the organization. And, I have volunteered to assist in revising and extending various guides and documents.

In your opinion, what are the greatest strengths of AAVSO?

Without a doubt, stewardship of the databases is the most central and essential mission of the AAVSO. These databases have a long and storied history and must be extended and maintained at a high level of credibility, accessibility, and reliability. Additionally, AAVSO has become perhaps an important avenue for would-be citizen astronomers to find educational support as well as an avenue to connect with like-minded others. Also the professional astronomical community has great respect for the organization, its mission, and the value it can bring to pro-Am collaboration.

If elected to the Board, how would you help AAVSO translate those strengths into opportunities?

In this uncertain time of great change, we need to be creative and imaginative, and willing to embrace new ways of doing things. The AAVSO's new Strategic Plan includes a path forward with a clear action plan. I believe that I, being new to the organization, can bring a newcomer's perspective to help to translate that plan into reality.

In your opinion, what are the greatest weaknesses of AAVSO?

I think that it is quite intimidating for new and prospective members. No one wants to appear foolish or make some embarrassing mistake. Therefore new ways of breaking down those perceived barriers should be found, leading to integrating new members into the life of the organization as painlessly as possible. Awareness of this is included in the new Strategic Plan, and progress in this regard is already underway. We must be ever more pro-active in making the organization friendly to prospective/new members.

If elected to the Board, how would you help the AAVSO effectively meet those challenges?

The Strategic Plan is an impressive outcome of the extended effort by the Committee, the executive director, and the board. I hope that I can make a reasonable contribution to bringing the plan into fruition, by bringing whatever wisdom and experience I have accumulated along the way.

In your estimation, does the AAVSO run the risk of becoming too narrow, when the Strategic Plan (see above) suggests a continuing need to adapt to changing conditions and to think laterally?

Having reviewed the Strategic Plan, I really do not think that there is much risk of 'becoming too narrow'. The plan seems to demand a broadening of the scope of the organization and is quite ambitious in its breadth.