

Dear AAPT Member,

At the 2021 Summer Meeting, during the Doc Brown Futures Award plenary, award recipient Dr. Ramón Barthelemy raised awareness about the history of lesbian, gay, bi, trans, and other queer and/or genderqueer (LGBTQ+) individuals, groups, and causes. He also called for increased investment by AAPT in issues that impact LGBTQ+ people in physics learning spaces. Dr. Barthelemy's plenary motivated us to improve the transparency of historical and ongoing pro-LGBTQ+ efforts co-led by AAPT members and staff, and to invite participation in, critique of, and proposals for existing or new initiatives. As a step toward these goals, we have written this letter in consultation with several AAPT members (including queer people) who are active in organizing for equity, inclusion, accessibility, and diversity in AAPT.

As a professional organization of physics educators, we are intentionally a dynamic and evolving group striving to respond to the current needs of AAPT members at all levels. As part of the [strategic plan](#) adopted in 2019, efforts to examine all parts of our association including governance structure, policies, procedures, practice, and programs with attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion have become a top priority. This includes efforts to best serve LGBTQ+ colleagues.

To make some of our efforts more transparent, we summarize several collaborations between AAPT members and staff. All of these collaborations have been informed or led by LGBTQ+ people. We note that none of them are done or perfect, and the list below is not comprehensive. Multiple collaborations resulted in institutionalized changes to AAPT policies, procedures, and practices.

1. **Providing and advertising gender pronoun stickers:** In 2017, the AAPT Committee on Diversity in Physics [recommended](#) to the Board that AAPT provide a mechanism through which conference attendees can indicate their gender pronouns at AAPT National Meetings. The recommendation was made in response to a request from an AAPT member and a charge to the Committee from the Board to recommend actions to improve inclusiveness in AAPT. In response, staff began providing optional gender pronoun stickers to conference attendees. With input from AAPT members, the AAPT Presidential chair and the Director of Programs and Conferences sent a [letter](#) to AAPT members explaining gender pronouns with the help of LGBTQ+ member input.
2. **Providing and advertising gender-neutral restrooms:** Since 2017, the AAPT Director of Programs and Conferences has negotiated with hotels and venues to offer gender-neutral restrooms at National Meetings. For in-person meetings, gender-neutral restrooms are advertised via signs within hotels and venues and on maps included in program materials.

3. **Valuing LGBTQ+ expertise within AAPT structures:** In partnership with the Board, the [Committee on Diversity in Physics](#) increased the size of the committee. In doing so, the Board and the Committee aim to support an increasingly diverse committee membership, including representation of LGBTQ+ people. Similarly, with input from the Board, the [Committee on Laboratories](#) rewrote its mission statement to explicitly value, monitor, and strive to enhance gender- and sexuality-based diversity among committee members and invited speakers.
4. **Hiring LGBTQ+ experts from beyond AAPT:** In 2019, AAPT hired Dr. Simone Kolysh to facilitate multiple [workshops](#), including “Chasing Objectivity, Failing at Diversity” and “Commute of Power and Oppression.” In 2021, AAPT invited McKensie Mack to give a [plenary](#) called “Building Cultures of Mutual Accountability.” Dr. Kolysh and Mack are experts on issues that impact LGBTQ+ people. They are not members of AAPT; the Board became aware of their work through recommendations from the membership. The workshops and plenary were free to all conference attendees.
5. **Hosting LGBTQ+ Meetups at AAPT National Meetings:** Since 2016, AAPT staff have partnered with members to coordinate LGBTQ+ Meetups at National Meetings.
6. **Selection of National Meeting Sites:** Since 2019, the [Meetings Location Committee](#) has followed the [California AB1887](#) policy, which prohibits travel to states that have laws that discriminate against LGBTQ+ people. In addition, it was decided that the committee will include a representative from the [Committee on Diversity in Physics](#) moving forward.

Organizing for institutional change is a perpetual process, and many of the above efforts require continued attention and revision. For example, the AAPT Board has been asked to consider augmenting pronoun stickers with the option to print pronouns on name tags. Doing so would mean that pronouns would be treated on equal footing with other information about conference attendees (e.g., institutional affiliation). For people who have changed their minds about whether to display their pronouns or which pronouns to display, stickers available on-site would provide flexibility to change the pronouns selected at the time of registration.

Unfortunately, organizing for institutional change sometimes involves friction among the corresponding stakeholders and decision-makers. Friction happens in part because all people who aspire to LGBTQ+ allyship (especially those who are cis and straight) sometimes make choices that harm people who are queer and/or trans. AAPT is no exception, and the Board is committed to understanding and working to repair harm when we become aware of it.

In the future, we hope to co-create pro-LGBTQ+ policies, procedures, and practices in partnership with diverse stakeholders, especially members who are queer and/or trans. As part of this growth process, the AAPT Board will seek experts to provide on-going, periodic diversity, equity and inclusion training, with attention to concerns that impact LGBTQ+ AAPT members

and staff. The Board is also committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of all AAPT members when national meeting sites are selected. As part of this commitment, the Board will ensure that LGBTQ+ perspectives and concerns are considered on the Meetings Location Planning Committee. Further, the Board will continue efforts to make ongoing DEI work highly visible in all programming, including but not limited to continuing support for the DEI resource room, sponsoring a DEI-focused plenary speaker, and supporting LGBTQ+ meetups at all National Meetings.

If you have any questions, suggestions, or criticisms, we invite you to contact the AAPT President, currently Jan Mader, via email at president@aapt.org. The AAPT president will be a point person for LGBTQ+ issues and will help you get connected to the relevant information, individuals, or groups within AAPT.

Sincerely,

Jan Mader, AAPT President
Toni Sauncy, AAPT President-Elect
Duane Merrell, AAPT Vice President
Chandralekha Singh, AAPT Past President