

AAPT Area Chairs-Section Representatives Planning Retreat—May 2007 Preliminary Synthesis Report

On May 23-25, 2007, 66 active members of AAPT met at the American Center for Physics for a Planning Retreat. The unprecedented gathering consisted of the 18 area chairs or designees, 39 section representatives or designees, and a number of board members and officers of the AAPT. The goal of the retreat was to discuss ways to energize the organization's ability to do effective work at any local level and to align its intellectual activities more clearly with significant areas of need in physics education. Participants explored and discussed more effective ways for the central organization to support its sections and area committees, and for the sections and the area committees to be more engaged in advancing AAPT's mission. This synthesis report presents ideas that emerged from the retreat, and is being made available to retreat participants for their comments. An expanded version will be submitted to the AAPT Governance Review Committee and the Executive Board. All of the documents used for and generated at the retreat are available at the retreat website: <http://www.aapt.org/govretreat>

Framed by AAPT's mission and vision, the discussion was based on the premise that AAPT's intellectual work involves global and local dimensions, and ideally all physics educators should be members of AAPT.

Mission: AAPT's mission is to enhance the understanding and appreciation of physics through teaching.

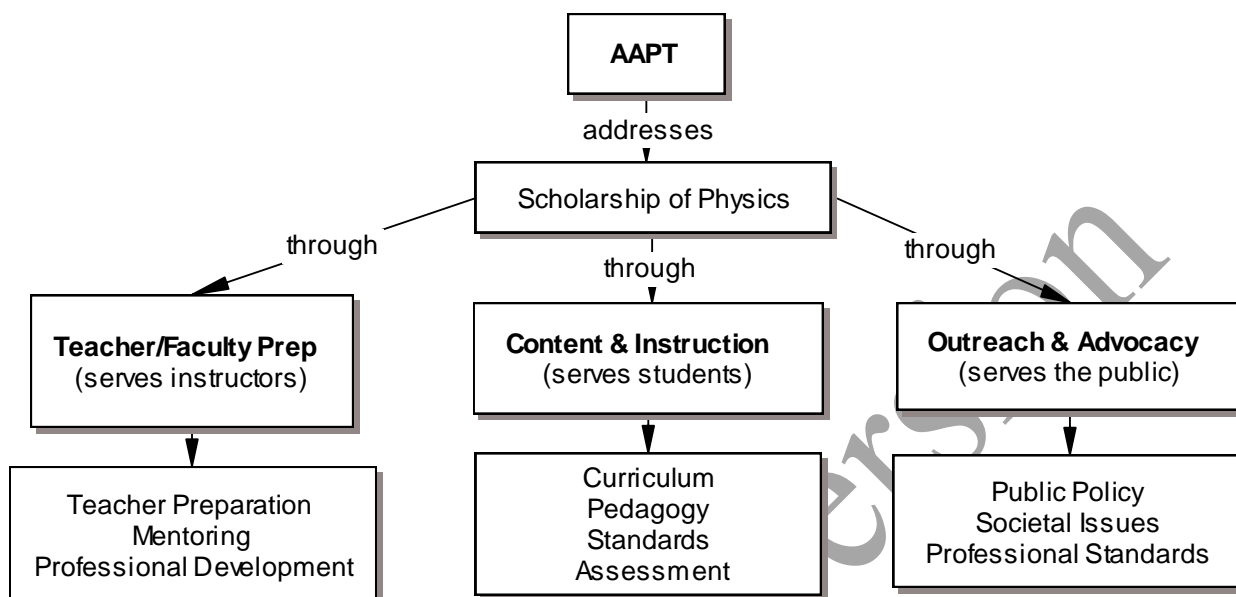
Vision: Recognizing the value of physics learning in advancing the public good, AAPT's vision is to become the leading voice and driving force in physics education, serving physics educators as their leading resource and advocate.

Working in small groups consisting of Area Chairs and Section Representatives, and in mixed groups of Area Chairs and Section Representatives, participants identified several areas of concern with the current structure of AAPT. Those concerns led to the creation of the following list of needs:

AAPT Needs

- Improve communication:
 - Area Committees to National
 - Sections to Sections
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 - Area Committee to Area Committee
 - Area Committees to Sections
 - All of the above to members
 - More user-friendly website (this is in progress)
- Increase and revitalize
 - Leadership
 - Membership
- Enhance the connection between members of Sections and National
- Engage more effectively with:
 - sections/ reps
 - committees/chairs – beyond planning sessions
 - public (general, legislators, school boards, etc.)
- Provide continuing education units (these are already available)
- Offer traveling workshops
- Organize high-quality outreach material to local areas
- Develop new-teacher resources and mentoring

Working in small groups, participants discussed possible overall structures of the *intellectual domains* that would define the work of AAPT. The structures that were presented at the end of the retreat shared common characteristics indicated in the graphic below.



In terms of a structure to support this emerging structure, participants suggested up to three new AAPT staff positions to coordinate the work in each of the domains. These coordinators could be permanent AAPT employees, existing or new hires, or could be “rotators,” who serve for one or two years. Working with an elected Leadership Group for each domain, these advocates would develop meeting sessions, propose task forces, work on focus issues, and maintain sustained and short-term programs. There was a strong sentiment to retain existing Area Committees, but there was no final consensus on the role of the existing area committees in a new structure. The existing area committees could be organized within each domain (one possibility is shown below) or could be reorganized to better meet the needs of the interest groups they represent within each domain.

Teacher/Faculty Prep	Content	Outreach
Graduate Education	Apparatus	History & Philosophy
Pre-HS	Educational Technologies	Minorities
High School	Laboratories	Professional Concerns
Two-Year College	High School	Science Education for the Public
Undergraduate Education	Two-Year College	Women in Physics
Research in Physics Education	Undergraduate Education	International Education
Professional Concerns	Research in Physics Education	Senior Physicists
Teacher Preparation	Space Science & Astronomy	

A set of ideas for strengthening the *local networks* (sections) and more clearly linking their work to the central AAPT office was presented. For this purpose, a local network is defined as a geographical subset of a global community of members. The intent is to establish local networks as communities small enough to be able to talk to and support each other.

To be strong and sustainable, every local network should demonstrate the following characteristics:

- Be small enough geographically so people have regular personal interaction.
- Have local professional and logistical support.
- Have professional and logistical support from outside the local network; e.g. from the central AAPT office.
- Be representative of, and reaching out to, multiple constituencies (e.g., HS, universities, colleges, relevant industries, government labs, etc.).
- Maintain a leadership structure that rejuvenates itself to provide continuity.
- Assure that leaders or coordinators have sufficient time and support to accomplish their tasks.
- Assure that network activity and participation are valued and recognized by the schools, universities, colleges and AAPT.
- Be flexible and agile enough to address local issues quickly, thoroughly, and in a targeted fashion.

The following tasks would become responsibilities of members within the local network (with professional and logistical support from AAPT central):

- Plan local activities (e.g., meetings, professional development days, talks, workshops, visits to departments...).
- Monitor local physics related activities and needs.
- Develop response plans to address local issues and needs (e.g., HS activities coordinator, colloquia schedule).
- Publicize local network activities.
- Provide member stewardship (e.g., who is new, who has special professional needs, linking members with similar interests, identifying part-time teachers).
- Maintain financial records and support.
- Maintain communications with other organizations or groups of interest to the local network, as well as AAPT central.
- Provide public advocacy on local issues.
- Coordinate recognition and rewards for successful activities.
- Provide mentoring of members.
- Attract young teachers to be active in AAPT and help them overcome initial challenges.

The underlying idea is that every member of a section/local network is a member of AAPT, and every member of AAPT is also a member of a section/local network. Hence, the distinction between membership in the national organization and membership in the section/local network vanishes. Along with this, participants discussed ideas for various levels of membership, as outlined below.

- The lowest cost membership tier provides a member with the regular AAPT electronic newsletters, full access to AAPT list serves, access to the electronic member directory and to the web site, and affiliation with a local network.
- A mid-cost membership tier might add electronic access to *The Physics Teacher*, the *American Journal of Physics*, or to *Interactions*.
- Another mid-cost membership tier might add electronic access to both *The Physics Teacher* and the *American Journal of Physics*.

- The highest-tier membership might add paper copies of one (or both) of the journals, along with the ability to submit abstracts for national meetings and reduced meeting fees.

There was general consensus that to assure success of this local network model, adequate funding would be necessary. The Retreat participants considered that AAPT would provide funding to support section/local network activities, perhaps based on the number of AAPT members in the network. This approach would require a clear understanding of what membership means and what benefits are offered for possible differing membership tiers. As an example, any member could attend any section or local meeting and pay a member registration rate; non-members would pay a non-member registration rate. The same dual fee structure would apply to national meetings, and conferences. Clearly, some of these details would need to be worked out as other aspects of the governance model are developed.

Preliminary Version