



Solar Observatory Council (SOC) Charter

Approved by the AURA Board of Directors, 3 April 2025

Preamble

The Solar Observatory Council, or SOC (hereafter “the Council”) is a Management Council of the AURA Board of Directors (hereafter “the Board”). The SOC has specific authority to act for the Board as detailed herein. Revisions and additions to AURA policies and procedures are reserved for decision by the Board.

SOC Mission

The SOC and each of its members are trustees and advocates to the Board for the mission of the National Solar Observatory, including the Daniel K. Inouye Solar Telescope. The SOC provides stewardship and management oversight for these facilities and gives support and advice to the NSO Director on important policy and management matters.

SOC Functions

1. Annually nominate its Chair and elect its Vice Chair. The Chair is elected to the AURA Board by the Member Representatives at its Annual Meeting for a one-year term, effective July 1 of that year. The Chair attends each meeting of the AURA Board of Directors ex officio, with voting privileges. The Vice Chair may attend the meetings of the AURA Board, but without voting privileges.
2. Recommend to the Board the appointment of the NSO Director. In the event of a vacancy or projected vacancy in the position of NSO Director, the SOC Chair and the Board Chair will together appoint and charge a Search Committee. Members of this committee may include members of the Council and the Board. The search committee will normally be expected to identify a short list of candidates to the Council. The Council will then make a recommendation to the Board through the AURA President.
3. Recommend the reappointment or termination of the NSO Director. At the time designated for review, the Council shall appoint, with the approval of the Board Chair, a special committee to evaluate the performance of the NSO Director and to make a recommendation regarding reappointment or termination to the Council. The Council will receive this report and make a recommendation to the Board, via the AURA President.

4. Appoint the NSO Deputy Director(s) in the event of a vacancy or projected vacancy, based on a recommendation by the Director and, as appropriate, a special search committee appointed by the Director and the SOC Chair.
5. Oversee the management of NSO.
 - a. Periodically evaluate the effectiveness of NSO, based on performance management criteria established in consultation with the National Science Foundation.
 - b. Regularly review the hiring, promotion, and tenure processes. The Council should play an active role in ensuring the soundness of the selection criteria and the consistency of the management, scientific, and technical factors affecting personnel decisions.
 - c. Review recommendations from the NSO Director for tenured appointments; recommend for or against approval by the Board. The SOC review is the final examination of the merits of the case. The Board's action is intended to ensure that due process was followed.
 - d. Review and approve proposals requiring Board approval as outlined in Section C-II ("*Corporate Commitment and Signature Authority*") of the AURA Policies and Procedures Manual.
 - e. Act in accordance with AURA Conflict of Interest policies for all responsibilities delegated by the Board.
 - f. Select and/or appoint such other committees as are appropriate to affect the Council's oversight functions. Receive and respond to these committee reports, considering the response and comments of the NSO Director.
6. Submit to the Board a report on SOC activities for consideration and transmission by the Board to the Member Representatives at their Annual Meeting. From time to time, prepare and submit such other reports as may be required.

SOC Membership

The Council shall consist of nine (9) core members that are elected by the AURA Board, and at least four (4) of the core members shall be from AURA Member Institutions or AURA Board of Directors or both.

In addition to the core members, the AURA President is an ex officio member of the SOC; the President may designate an alternative representative from AURA.

The Council may appoint up to three (3) additional members as it deems appropriate or necessary to: add particular expertise to its membership; include representation from key partner organizations; or otherwise expand the breadth of the Council to perform its functions as delegated by the Board. It is desirable that the terms of appointed members remain staggered to enable at least one potential appointment annually.

It is desirable that the SOC composition:

- i. have adequate representation from the community of solar astronomers and users of NSO facilities; and
- ii. include relevant senior management experience to carry out the Council's oversight functions.

SOC Logistics

TERMS. Members shall serve for staggered terms of three (3) years and may serve no more than two (2) terms consecutively.

QUORUM. A majority of Council members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

VOTING. All actions taken by the Council shall be by majority vote.

MEETINGS. The Council shall meet at least two (2) times per year. As necessary to execute the Council's specific authority, the Chair may call additional meetings, including by remote participation.