

ASTRONOMY AND ASTROPHYSICS

Graduate Program Head	Randall McEntaffer
Program Code	ASTRO
Campus(es)	University Park (Ph.D., M.S.)
Degrees Conferred	Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Master of Science (M.S.) Dual-Title Ph.D. in Astronomy and Astrophysics and Astrobiology
The Graduate Faculty	View (https://secure.gradsch.psu.edu/gpms/?searchType=fac&prog=ASTRO)

The graduate program in Astronomy and Astrophysics prepares students for careers in astronomy, space science and education. Graduate instruction and research opportunities are available in theoretical, observational, and instrumental astronomy and astrophysics. Currently active areas of theoretical research include high-energy astrophysics (including theory of neutron stars, black holes, and gamma ray bursts), relativity and cosmology, stellar dynamics and planet formation, and computational methodology. Observational areas include spectroscopic and photometric observations of high-redshift quasars, galaxies and the intergalactic medium; gamma-ray bursts; X-ray and visible light studies of quasars, starburst and other active galaxies; visible light studies of nearby galaxies and their stellar populations; infrared study of brown dwarfs and protoplanetary disks; spectroscopy and modeling of binary, magnetically active, pre- and post-main sequence stars; spectroscopic searches for planetary systems. Instrumental areas include: development of X-ray telescopes and detectors; and high-precision visible and near-infrared light spectrographs. Department faculty members participate in several university cross-disciplinary organizations: Astrobiology Research Center, Center for Astrostatistics, Center for Exoplanets and Habitable Worlds, and the Institute for Gravitation and the Cosmos.

The department played a seminal role in and leads many science investigations using two NASA-launched satellites, the Chandra X-ray Observatory and the Swift panchromatic gamma-ray burst mission, and the innovative 9-meter Hobby-Eberly Telescope located at the McDonald Observatory in Texas. Faculty and students also observe with other space-based observatories (GALEX, Hubble Space Telescope, Spitzer Space Telescope, XMM-Newton) and ground-based telescopes (Gemini and other national facilities, Magellan, Keck, South Africa Large Telescope, Very Large Telescopes). Physics faculty members closely associated with the Department are involved in particle and gravitational wave observations using the Auger, AMANDA, Ice Cube, and LIGO instruments. The Department has extensive computing facilities, and research is also conducted with university and national supercomputing resources.

Graduate students also have ample opportunity to acquire experience in undergraduate teaching and public outreach.