

Application for National Interim Membership to the IAU

Respected IAU Board

The University of Panama is the highest educational institution of our country and is responsible to ensure and oversee the higher education nationwide. The University of Panama is composed by several faculties and institutes.

The Physics Department, from the *Faculty of Natural & Exact Sciences and Technology [FACINET]*, has Astronomy within its areas of interest; there are at least seven Professors involved in the development of this area [two of them have a major degree in Astronomy], and together form the **National Committee for Astronomy [NCA]**, committed to promote the development of this science in Panama. The NCA's Board is comprised of

President: Cesar Garrido, PhD
E-mail: cgarrido_1999@yahoo.com
Phone: +507 523 5330

Secretary General: Vicente Forero Villao
E-mail: vicente_forero@yahoo.com
Phone: +507 523 6234 / +507 523 6235

Vice President: Etelvina Medina
E-mail: emedina0145@cwpanama.net
Phone: +507 523 6234 / +507 523 6235

Vice President: Eduardo Chung
E-mail: eduardochung@yahoo.com
Phone: +507 523 6234 / +507 523 6235

Institution address

*Universidad de Panamá
Facultad de Ciencias Naturales, Exactas y Tecnología
Departamento de Física
Ciudad de Panamá,
República de Panamá
Phone: +507 523 6234 / +507 523 6235*

Sources of Funding

-SENACYT – *National Board for Science and Technology*

<http://www.senacyt.gob.pa/>
 -UNIPANBID – University of Panama-InterAmerican Development Bank
<http://www.iadb.org/en/countries/panama/panama-and-the-idb,1042.html>
 -Universidad de Panamá
<http://www.up.ac.pa/PortalUp/index.aspx>
 -FACINET

Background

Panama is member of the **Assembly of Astronomers from Central America [AACAA]** and we have participated in several courses (**CURCAA: Cursos Centroamericanos de Astronomía y Astrofísica – Astronomy & Astrophysics Courses for Central America**) that have taken place in the Caribbean region since AACAA was created:

I-CURCAA	1995	– Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras
II-CURCAA	1996	– Universidad de El Salvador
III-CURCAA	1997	– Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala
IV-CURCAA	1998	– Universidad de Panamá
V-CURCAA	1999	– Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua
VI-CURCAA	2001	– Universidad de Costa Rica
VII-CURCAA	2002	– Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras
VIII-CURCAA	2003	– Universidad de El Salvador
IX-CURCAA	2004	– Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala
X-CURCAA	2006	– Universidad de Panamá
XI-CURCAA	2007	– Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua
XII-CURCAA	2008	– Universidad de Costa Rica

Two of these courses held in Panama and the **2011 CURCAA** should be held in Guatemala but as a courtesy from Guatemala, the venue was ceded to Panama. 2012 CURCAA will take place in Guatemala for this year is of great significance for the Mayan culture.

As a result of these initiatives, one panamanian student who attended these courses, got the opportunity to go in the Summer 2008 to the Observational Astronomy School at the Tonantzintla Observatory in Puebla, Mexico. For the next year, 3 more students attended this school.

We have also conducted general and updating Astronomy courses/seminars for high-school teachers; it's worth to remark that we have given updating seminars

in 2007 and 2008 and specially in 2009 due to the new definitions made by the IAU about the number of Solar system planets and the debate that was held in Prague [August 2006] as a result of new observations in the past twenty years. In 2000 we started to teach a new course, **Earth & Space Sciences** at the Physics Dept., that form part of the new curriculum to get an Educator Degree in the areas of Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics and Biology; this form part of the educators preparation on Integral Sciences and this will help them, in turn, to develop updated & advanced courses in Basic Sciences for junior and senior high schools.

Future plans: eight years ahead

Within our future plans we want to create a national astronomical observatory, based on a small 0.40m telescope. At this moment we have submitted a project on *Variable Stars* to SENACYT [now in the second phase of evaluation]. This will allow us to start a collaborative research on Variable Stars with the **Institute of Astronomy** of the **National Autonomous University of Mexico - UNAM**, thanks to a collaboration agreement between the University of Panama and the UNAM. There are also plans to create a university's planetarium as a form to popularize Astronomy, to increase the number of Astronomy courses at the FACINET and at the Faculty of Education of our university, to work with the **National Ministry of Education** in reviewing/updating the current plans and programs about the teaching of Astronomy in nationwide schools. All of the above will help the development of Astronomy in Panama, as a hope to increase the number of astronomers in particular and/or science-oriented professionals in general.

We are now organizing activities to commemorate the International Year of Astronomy and Beyond, with the creation of the **National Node for Astronomy**:

<http://www.astronomia2009.org.pa>

We are convinced that joining the IAU will help us to establish important contacts for the development of Astronomy and to enhance collaborations with members from other countries to promote exchange of scientific and technological local developments.