



MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

PARTIES:

- Department of Physics & Astronomy, UNM
- Graduate Studies, UNM

RE: Committee composition including professionals from regional/national labs

DATE: 1 August 2026

The above parties agree that:

1. The Department of Physics and Astronomy has developed long-term research and education partnerships with professional laboratories throughout UNM's geographic region, including Sandia National Laboratories (SNL), Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL), and National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO). Professional scientific staff from these laboratories are regularly offered academic appointments at UNM via Letter of Academic Title, which allows for productive collaboration with P&A faculty. Professional scientists from national and regional labs also serve as important mentors and research collaborators for UNM students pursuing graduate degrees.
2. Graduate Studies recognizes that UNM's relationship with professional laboratories creates important opportunities for graduate students in Physics & Astronomy that may not be available solely through UNM personnel and facilities. Graduate Studies also recognizes that laboratory professionals who hold a PhD and an academic appointment at UNM are qualified to serve in the role of "external member" on dissertation committees, even though they do not hold tenure-track faculty positions at UNM or another university.
3. The Department of Physics & Astronomy agrees to provide Graduate Studies annually with a list of lab-based scientists who are recommended for service on dissertation committees in the role of "external member." Everyone on the list must have a PhD, hold a valid UNM academic appointment via LAT, and must work full time at one of the following laboratories – Sandia National Laboratories (SNL), Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL), National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO), or another specified laboratory of equivalent stature. The list will include each person's name, laboratory employer, and LAT expiration date, and must be signed by the chair of the department of Physics & Astronomy as confirmation that the department wishes for each person on the list to remain eligible for one year to fulfill the role of "external member" on dissertation committees in the

PhD Physics program. The list must be sent to grad@unm.edu by August 1 each year and will remain valid through July 31 of the following year. In the event the Department of Physics & Astronomy wishes to add to or otherwise change the list, they may submit an amended version of the original list to grad@unm.edu at any time throughout the year. The amended version will have the same expiration date of July 31 of the following year, regardless of when it is submitted.

4. Graduate Studies agrees that verified LAT holders on the official P&A list will receive exceptions for approval as dissertation committee “external members,” despite their status as Category 4 committee members, which would normally not qualify them for service in this role. If the official P&A list includes any person who has not already been verified through the Request for Non-UNM Committee Service form, Graduate Studies will advise P&A of the need to complete this process. Please note the following limitations:
 - a. The above-described exceptions to committee service roles will apply only to dissertation committees in the PhD Physics program.
 - b. The above-described exceptions to committee service will be reviewed/approved for no more than one year at a time, based on the annual list submitted to Graduate Studies and any amendments, as described above.
 - c. The above-described exceptions to committee service requirements will have no impact on any deadline associated with degree completion or approval of graduate requirements.
 - d. Lab-based scientists and LAT holders are qualified to serve on dissertation committees as member or co-chair, as described in the UNM catalog, regardless of whether they are included on the annual P&A list described above. But they cannot serve as “co-chair” for any dissertation committee on which they are also designated as the “external member” as allowed through this MOU.
5. This agreement will be revisited by the parties for renewal no later than July 31, 2031.

SIGNATURES



7/31/2026

Gregory Taylor, Chair
Department of Physics & Astronomy

Date



7/31/26

Maria Lane, Dean, Graduate Studies

Date