

Job market tight for astronomy PhD's

A grim outlook for employment in astronomy persists, and the biggest problem continues to be an oversupply of PhD's. This discouraging picture, presented to us by Donald Goldsmith, chairman of the American Astronomical Society's Committee on Manpower and Employment, is based on the results of the committee's fall 1973 survey of current trends in PhD production and employment among astronomers.

"I might say that I'm known as a pessimist in these circles," Goldsmith was careful to point out, "but I attribute that to being closer to the data than some of these other people." Goldsmith also disputed the claims of many academics who say their students encounter no substantial difficulty finding jobs. "The real kicker is [that] to get a postdoctoral position is still not so hard . . . , but in terms of getting a real ladder position—that's what's disappeared in the difficult times of today."

It should be noted that the Manpower Division of the American Institute of Physics annually conducts two surveys—Physics and Astronomy Enrollments and Degrees, and the Graduate Student Survey. According to Susanne Ellis, who directs the AIP surveys, the limited number of astronomy-doctorate recipients included in the Graduate Student Survey reported more job offers than doctorate recipients in certain other physics subfields.

Admitting his possible bias, Goldsmith went on to point out several trends that emerged from his analysis of the most recent data, obtained from department chairmen at 45 universities in the US:

► Unemployment is definitely increasing. Out of a total of 361 PhD's granted between September 1969 and September 1972, 8% of them were reported to be having serious problems finding full-time employment in astronomy, up from 5% in the fall of 1972. This problem is exacerbated by the plight of astronomers in postdoctoral positions, 14% of whom were experiencing difficulty in finding full-time positions in astronomy, in contrast to 9% the year before. According to this year's survey a total of 208 astronomers in nonfaculty positions (mainly postdocs) will be vying for about 21 faculty openings expected to come available between now and June 1975.

► PhD production continues to rise in the short term. Between October 1973 and this June, an estimated 143 doc-

torates will be awarded, up from 120 a year ago. According to Goldsmith, this increase can be accounted for partly by the movement of graduate students from other disciplines, particularly physics, into astronomy, where the job crunch has not been quite so severe in recent years. And PhD physicists who go into astrophysics make the job market even tighter for astronomers.

► Graduate enrollment in astronomy has apparently declined—from 839 students in the fall of 1972 to 809 this past fall. Reporting practices vary and the figures reported are not complete, Goldsmith said, but it appears that graduate enrollments may be stabilizing or even declining, and that the PhD-production rate may soon return to the 120/year average that prevailed between September 1969 and September 1972.

For information concerning the AAS survey write to Henry M. Gurin, Executive Officer, AAS, 211 FitzRandolph Rd., Princeton, N.J. 08540; for free copies of the AIP surveys write the Manpower Division, AIP, 335 E. 45th St., New York, N.Y. 10017.

Curriculum discussion planned for AAPT meeting

A Conference on Broadening the Physics Curriculum, the first major national conference on physics education since the demise of the Commission on College Physics, will be among the highlights of the summer meeting of the American Association of Physics Teachers in Boone, N.C. (20–22 June). To make suggestions and for further information write to the conference chairman, Robert Tinker, Physics Department, Amherst College, Amherst, Mass. 01002; tel. (413) 542-2068 or 542-2251. For information on other meeting events write to AAPT, Drawer AW, Stony Brook, N. Y. 11790.

Patrick Young wins Science Writing Award

Patrick Young, science writer for *The National Observer*, was recently awarded the 1974 American Institute of Physics–United States Steel Foundation Science Writing Award in Physics and Astronomy. Two such awards are given each year, one to a journalist and one to a scientist.

The award, which consists of \$1500, a Möbius-strip trophy and a citation, was given to Young for "A quake is due at . . .," an article that appeared in *The*

National Observer on 16 June 1973. The editor of *The National Observer* was also presented with a citation. Young accepted the award at the meeting of the National Association of Science Writers held recently in Washington. He has specialized in science and medical writing with *The National Observer* since 1965.

Weiner to leave AIP's physics history center

Joan Nelson Warnow has been appointed acting director of the Center for History of Physics of the American Institute of Physics, effective 1 July 1974. Charles Weiner has resigned as director of the Center effective at the end of June.

Weiner has been appointed Professor of History of Science and Technology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. AIP has established a search committee headed by Martin J. Klein (Yale University) to select a historian of modern physics to direct the Center. Weiner will continue to serve the Center, acting as an adviser on special projects.

SPS elects five to Council posts

Five new members have been elected to three-year terms on the Council of the Society of Physics Students. They are Roger F. Hickey of Hartwick College, Oneonta, N.Y.; Hla Shwe of East Stroudsburg State College, Pa.; L. Worth Seagondollar of North Carolina State University; Henry Fenichel of the University of Cincinnati, and Mario Iona of the University of Denver. Cecil G. Shugart of Northeast Louisiana University has been re-elected to a two-year term as president of Sigma Pi Sigma, the physics honor society.

Students elected associate councilors for one-year terms are Edward B. Roth of Worcester Polytechnic Institute; Lubomyra Kmetyk of Cooper Union; Fred L. Marsh of Shippensburg State College, Pa.; Raymond Belott of Montgomery College, Md.; William Starnes Freeman of North Carolina State University; Steven Cartwright of Bradley University, Peoria, Ill.; (Owen) Hok Ming Gan of the University of Missouri, Kansas City; Roderic K. Stanley of East Texas State University; Charles R. Eisenmann of Arizona State University, and Rick Bernard Spielman of the University of California, Davis.