

Council authorizes new senior staff position for education

"Education may be the new top priority item for The American Physical Society in 1986," President Sidney Drell declared in opening the APS Council Meeting held in Atlanta on 26 January. A few hours later, the Council voted unanimously for a motion charging Drell to appoint a search committee that would prepare a job description for an additional senior staff member whose responsibilities would include strengthening the society's involvement with physics education (see box).

Education Committee members must fit their volunteer activities into already crammed research and teaching schedules. Staff work required to carry out ongoing projects and to respond to needs and initiatives will grow dramatically in the coming years. For these reasons, the Council responded positively to requests from the Education Committee and New York officers to appoint an additional senior staff physicist with primary responsibility for the Society's activities in education.

The Society's formal involvement in education began in 1972, when the Subcommittee on Education of the Committee on the Future of APS recommended that the Society initiate an education program. To devise and carry it out, they recommended the organization of a standing Committee on Education, which was established in 1973 with Ronald Geballe of the University of Washington, Seattle, as chairman. Early activities included the initiation of a visiting-physicist program to strengthen the bonds between academic institutions and industry. The Committee also organized, with the Forum on Physics and Society, a Symposium on Tradition and Change in Physics Graduate Education for the January 1975 APS-AAPT meeting in Anaheim, and it established strong links with the American Association of Physics Teachers and the American Institute of Physics. From 1975 to 1982 APS participated with AAPT in a joint Committee on Science Education for the General Public (PHYSICS TODAY, February 1975, page 75).

Over the years the APS Committee



At the APS Education Committee meeting in Baltimore on 24 March 1985, committee chairman Kenneth W. Ford (right), Robert R. Wilson, President of APS in 1985 (center), and Marc Brodsky of IBM, Yorktown Heights, discuss a proposed initiative to provide high-school teachers with summer employment in industry.

on Education has organized and sponsored several successful symposia, the most recent being the two-day Symposium on Pre-college Education held at the January meeting in Atlanta.

March meeting 1986. For the March meeting in Las Vegas, the Committee has organized a Symposium on Frontiers in Physics Education, in which the participants will be Jerry P. Gollub (Haverford College), Sheila Tobias (University of Arizona, Tucson), James Rutherford (American Association for the Advancement of Science), Frederick Reif (University of California, Berkeley) and Robert Resnick (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute). The moderator of the symposium will be Education Committee member Marc H. Brodsky (IBM, Yorktown Heights, New York).

The APS Industrial Summer Intern Program, now in its eighth year, was begun by the Education Committee and this year is administered by a subcommittee headed by Eugenie Mielczarek

(PHYSICS TODAY, October, page 139). The program provides opportunities for college physics majors to work in industrial research laboratories during the summer months.

In 1983, as head of the Education Committee, Judith Franz started the College-High School Interaction Committee in collaboration with AAPT. This group has organized a network of several hundred resource persons on college faculties who have expressed a willingness to interact with and help their local pre-college physics teachers. The committee, which publishes a newsletter describing successful examples of such collaboration, wishes to encourage interaction of college departments with local middle- and elementary-school as well as high-school teachers. John Russell of Southeastern Massachusetts University currently heads the committee.

In 1984 Education Committee member Peter Lindenfeld of Rutgers Uni-

Daniel E. Murnick of AT&T Bell Labs (second from left) describes his proposal to employ high-school teachers in industry to (right to left) APS Treasurer Harry Lustig, Lewis Slack, AIP Director for Educational Programs, Richard H. Sands, University of Michigan, Lillian C. McDermott, University of Washington, and (far left) Edith Rees, APS. ▶



◀ **Peter Lindenfeld** of Rutgers University describes his survey of New Jersey teachers while Eugenie Mielczarek of George Mason University studies a handout. This photograph and the others were taken by Baltimore photographer Roger Miller.

versity conducted a survey of high-school physics teachers in New Jersey (PHYSICS TODAY, November, page 46, and *American Journal of Physics* 53, 1065, 1985). In terms of implications for the physics profession and for APS, the most significant result was the teachers' overwhelming desire for continuing-education opportunities directly relevant to their teaching.

On 20 November 1985 Robert R. Wilson and Anthony P. French—in their capacity as last year's presidents of APS and AAPT—testified to the National Science Board Committee on Undergraduate Science and Engineering Education (PHYSICS TODAY, February, page 65). Part of their testimony was based on the results of an APS-AAPT survey of department chairmen

conducted under the leadership of Resnick earlier that year.

APS has joined the Triangle Coalition and is working with AAPT and AIP on two projects spearheaded by AAPT: the International Physics Olympiad and the Inter-American Conference on Physics Education, which is scheduled for July 1987 in Mexico City.

For the summer of 1986 the Committee on Education has initiated a pilot program to place high-school physics teachers in summer industrial research jobs. Committee member Daniel E. Murnick of AT&T Bell Laboratories championed the idea of such a program and demonstrated its potential when he hired a high-school teacher in summer 1985 with good results.

All of these activities respond to a set of serious problems in physics education that, according to 1985-86 Education Committee Chairman Kenneth W. Ford, "contain the seeds of a future crisis in research. Trends of the last 15 years, if continued, could threaten the health of the physics research enterprise in America by leading to an uninformed and unsympathetic citizenry, and an insufficient supply of capable researchers."

In the years since its inception, 44 APS members have served on the Education Committee. The committee has been headed, starting with Geballe in 1973-74, by Eugen Merzbacher (1975-76), Roger Herman (1977), James Stevenson (1978), R. Glen Kepler (1979-80), Bernard Silbernagel (1981), Alan R. Portis (1982), Franz (1983-84) and Ford (1985-86). Until his retirement as APS Treasurer in October 1985, Joseph Burton served as the official APS liaison to the Committee, supplying the creative energy and staff work that have been essential to the Committee's operations. Burton's successor, Harry Lustig, and Edith Rees, Coordinator for Special Programs, have taken over the liaison and staff functions for education. They should be contacted at APS regarding any of the projects mentioned in this article or with questions or suggestions relating to the Education Committee's activities. The APS headquarters is at 335 East 45th Street, New York, NY 10017; telephone (212) 682-7341. □

Nominations sought for new education position

A search committee has been established to select an individual for the new education position authorized at the January APS Council meeting. The position may be full time, in which case it will carry the title of Deputy Executive Secretary and involve additional management duties, or it may be part time. The functions will include coordination of all APS education activities, management of the special educational projects, planning of education sessions at APS meetings, monitoring of legislation on education (in conjunction with the APS Office on Public Affairs) and close collaboration with AAPT and AIP on educational programs. The search committee is looking for an experienced PhD physicist who has taught at a graduate or undergraduate institution and has a strong interest in education, including pre-college education. Experience in administration and knowledge of educational legislation also are desirable. The location will be APS headquarters in New York if full time and flexible if part time, and the salary is open. The deadline for completed applications is 25 April 1986. Further information regarding the position can be obtained from Lillian C. McDermott, Chair, APS Search Committee, Department of Physics, FM-15, University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195.