

APS Council adopts statement on integrity in physics

On 24 April, the APS Council adopted a statement, "Integrity in physics," drafted by the committee on opportunities, which currently is headed by Daniel Bershadler (Stanford University), councilor for the division of fluid dynamics. The Council approved and transmitted the statement for the attention of all APS members as a supporting resolution. The statement reads as follows:

The physics community has traditionally enjoyed a well-deserved reputation for maintenance of high ethical standards and integrity in its scientific activities. Indeed, The American Physical Society is one of the few professional societies which has not felt the need for a formal code of ethics. Understandably, physicists have a tendency to take this situation for granted. However, the matter warrants an active awareness on the part of all physicists, for this is a precious asset which deserves continuing support and protection. (Examples of concerns recently expressed are the remarks of Dr. Frank Press, president of the National Academy of Sciences, in *PHYSICS TODAY*, April 1987 [page 47]; and the booklet published by Sigma Xi entitled *Honor in Science*, second edition, 1986). It is

coupled not only to the reputations of individual physicists and their organizations, but also to the image and credibility of the physics profession as perceived by scientific colleagues, government officials and the American public as a whole.

What are some of the types of misconduct which violate professional integrity? Known instances cover a spectrum ranging from the rather subtle to those that are quite flagrant. Examples include (1) plagiarism, such as the unauthorized use of original material contained in a proposal under peer review, or the unacknowledged use of previously published material; (2) fabrication of data or selective reporting of results; (3) submission of the same paper or trivial variations thereof to more than one publication channel; (4)

automatic coauthorship when the individual in question has not made a substantive contribution to the particular work; (5) a reviewer's lack of impartiality; (6) slow response on the part of a referee in order to delay processing of a proposal or a manuscript submitted for publication.

That instances of professional misconduct on the part of physicists are few is a source of satisfaction to all of us. But there is an important operational implication: The high standards of professional integrity in the physics community constitute an honorable tradition that deserves to be carefully maintained and transmitted with enthusiasm to younger colleagues and, ultimately, to future generations. The welfare of the profession depends on it.

Representatives of divisions, sections and groups meet

Recognizing the crucial importance of divisions, sections and topical groups in the life of the society, APS managing officers met with representatives of these units at APS headquarters in New York on 3 April. This was the second of what might become an annual meeting. The first was held on 2 June 1986.

The meeting was held to explore ways in which the society might best serve these diverse units and to encourage the exchange of information and ideas. The participants discussed meetings, governance, finances, APS committees and educational activities during the daylong meeting, which generated four recommendations that were subsequently passed by the APS Council at the 24 April meeting in Crystal City. The recommendations are as follows:

► "That Council form a task force consisting of all division and forum

councilors, to evaluate the present yearly patterns of all APS technical meetings, and to recommend to Council by its meeting on 24 January 1988 a pattern for the future, and a plan for continued coordination of meetings among all the technical subunits of the society.

"The division and forum councilors are charged to be fully informed about the present pattern of the divisions' meetings and of the views and the needs of the divisions and related topical groups with respect to the potential for coordination of meetings with other divisions, topical groups and sections of the society."

► "It is the sense of the group that there exists a wide variability in the way the division councilors interact with the relevant division executive committees. We believe that the Council should periodically review this interface with the object of improving

this interaction between Council and the divisions, and to formalize the specific duties and responsibilities of the councilors to their respective divisions."

► "Now that the topical groups have been successfully launched, with a fast-growing membership and range of activities, the question arises of how they should be incorporated equitably into the governance processes of the society. We believe now is the time for the Council to study effective ways and means for this to occur, which take account of the wide range of topical group characteristics and functions. There is also a need to review the rules established for the financial support of these groups."

► "[We believe that] when APS dues are increased Council [should] allocate a proportionate increase in the allocation to divisions, sections and topical groups." □