

Summary of Changes to the McDonald Observatory and Department of Astronomy Board of Visitors (BOV) Bylaws

Approved by BOV members at the Austin meeting on March 7, 2026.

At the West Texas meeting in July 2025, the BOV's executive committee created a subcommittee to review and revise the 2017 iteration of the bylaws. The bylaws were revised to allow flexibility in membership dues, encourage younger membership for long-term sustainability, and align the bylaws with current BOV practices.

Major Revisions

Membership

- Clarifies that memberships may be held by an individual or a couple and that annual contributions are required for good standing.
- Removes fixed dollar amounts from Full, Sustaining, and Leadership memberships; future adjustments may be proposed by the Executive Committee and approved by the BOV.
- Grandfathers existing Associate and Honorary members but discontinues these categories moving forward.
- Establishes a new Junior membership option for candidates under 40, with defined age- and service-based graduation requirements, to support long-term board vitality.
- Confirms that the 250-member cap applies only to voting members (Leadership, Sustaining, Full, Associate).
- Eliminates the unused three-year reelection requirement; members serve until resignation.
- Adds language allowing members to be asked to resign upon joint recommendation of BOV leadership, the Department Chair and the Observatory Director.

Committees and Leadership

- Updates officer titles to Chair, Vice Chair, and Immediate Past Chair.
- Revises the Secretary's role to reflect current responsibilities focused on member liaison and engagement.
- Extends committee terms from one to two years.
- Formalizes leadership succession, with the Vice Chair assuming the Chair role at the end of the Chair's term.