POLICIES AND PROCEDURES – DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICS

I. Introduction

The function of the department shall be to coordinate the various activities and development of the discipline which include:

1. Development of curriculum.
2. Preparation, submission, and administration of a budget.
3. Planning of buildings and facilities in which the department has a legitimate interest.
4. Implementing policies on appointment, reappointment and tenure for department members.

II. Definitions

1. Faculty shall mean all assistant, associate and full professors holding tenure or tenure track appointments.
2. Department shall mean the Physics Department at USM.
3. Governance Constitution shall mean the USM Governance Constitution as approved by the Board of Trustees.
4. The regulations contained in the AFUM agreement and the Governance Constitution shall supersede all departmental Policies and Procedures.

III. Organizational Structure of the Department of Physics

A. Committees

There shall be several standing committees in the department. Policies and Procedures for each committee must be approved by a 2/3 majority vote of the Faculty.

1. Personnel Committee

The personnel committee is responsible for all departmental personnel matters.

2. Finance Committee

The finance committee is responsible for setting department financial policy and for advising the chair about departmental spending.

B. Curriculum Development

There is no separate curriculum committee. Proposals for courses and/or programs will be submitted to the whole department for approval before being forwarded to the College Curriculum Review Committee. A department member will be chosen to represent the department at CRC meetings.
C. Chairperson

1. The chair shall be responsible for calling and presiding over department meetings.

2. The chair shall be responsible for implementing and/or presenting to higher administrative authorities the decisions of the department.

3. The chair shall be responsible for routine administration of departmental affairs and shall keep the department informed.

4. In all actions and decisions, the chair will be accountable to the department.

5. The chair will develop and administer the budget in consultation with the finance committee.

6. The chair is responsible for proper implementation of the Faculty Personnel Policies in the department.

7. The chair is responsible for the continuing review of the goals, programs and effectiveness of the department.

8. The department may, at any time, vote to recommend removal of the chairperson by a 2/3 majority vote of the department membership and, if the recommendation is accepted by the dean, proceed to nominate a replacement.

IV. Policies and Procedures

A. Personnel Committee

1. Composition.

The personnel committee of the department of physics shall consist of the entire faculty (including faculty on sabbatical leaves and leaves of absence), acting as a committee of the whole.

2. Procedures for review of tenure track and tenured faculty members.

On a regular basis, as required by the College of Arts and Sciences, the department chair shall present the name of each member of the department to the department Personnel Committee for review. Department members desiring consideration for reappointment, tenure or promotion shall submit requests in writing to the chair and Dean of the college in accordance with University and AFUM guidelines. In the case of an adverse decision, a complete and explicit statement of the reason for such decision must be communicated in writing by the Personnel Committee to the faculty member.

Action on all recommendations shall be completed by the dates set by the College of Arts and Sciences. The decision of the Personnel Committee shall be communicated in
writing to the faculty member concerned, to the Dean of the College, and to the department chair.

3. Criteria for Evaluation of tenure track and tenured faculty members.

a. Teaching

Teaching is the primary mission of the Physics Department. Thus, a major emphasis must be placed on the evaluation of teaching effectiveness. The committee shall use the following in evaluating teaching:

i) Student evaluation summaries for the period in question.
ii) Course syllabi
iii) Assignments and tests
iv) Texts, lab instructions and other handouts
v) Peer evaluation

In addition, consideration shall be given to development of new courses or significant changes made to existing courses, new approaches to teaching the subject, use of current materials, and availability to students.

Student evaluation will be done by using the standard USM student evaluation questionnaire. In addition, an instructor may use a questionnaire of their own design. For all student evaluation vehicles, the instructor shall not be present when questionnaires are distributed. Completed questionnaires should be delivered by a student to the department office. Unless the questionnaires are computer scored, they will then be delivered to either the personnel committee chair or the department chair for certification. They will be returned to the instructor only after grades have been submitted to the registrar.

A probationary faculty member should begin to demonstrate a sustained pattern of effective teaching by the end of the second year. Effective teaching may be demonstrated through course preparation as evidenced through syllabi and course materials, class management as determined through class visits, and student reception as evidenced by student evaluations.

For reappointment beyond the fourth year, the faculty member must demonstrate a sustained pattern of effective teaching and progress toward high quality teaching. High quality teaching is evidenced by at least one of the following: excellent care in preparation, excellent student evaluations, or excellent development of courses or curricula.

A recommendation for tenure and/or promotion presumes a sustained record of high quality teaching. Promotion to Professor requires excellence in at least two of the areas mentioned above.

b. Scholarship

Scholarship is the secondary part of the faculty member’s obligation to the
Department and the University. Ordinarily, scholarship will mean research in physics or a closely related field. Faculty applying for tenure or promotion must have an active research program. The timeliness of the University’s provision of the necessary resources for a faculty member to initiate a research program must be considered during the course of evaluation. The peer committee shall base its evaluation of scholarship on the following:

i) publications in refereed journals
ii) presentations at meetings
iii) grant proposals
iv) inclusion of undergraduates in the research
v) progress reports on all internal and external awards

For reappointment beyond the second year, the faculty member must submit evidence of implementing a research program.

For reappointment beyond the fourth year, the peer committee must be able to discern progress as evidenced by journal publications, meeting presentations or submission of grant proposals that seek funding for original research.

A recommendation of tenure requires a sustained record of scholarship evidenced by publication in refereed journals or presentations at national or international professional meetings.

Promotion to the rank of Professor presumes a significant contribution to the research field and a reputation beyond the local or regional which could be demonstrated by publication in refereed journals or authorship of scholarly books.

c. Service

Service is essential to a faculty member’s duties. The proportion of a faculty member’s time devoted to service will vary throughout their career being lighter during the pre-tenure period. At all times, service at the departmental level is required. Because faculty members have different strengths and opportunities, additional service may take one or more of the following forms:

i) college and university assignments or service
ii) professional service in the discipline
iii) community service in the discipline

Reappointment, promotion and tenure require evidence of continued service.

4. Evaluation of Part Time Faculty

On an annual basis, the Personnel Committee shall review part time faculty performance using the following as appropriate:

a) Student evaluations
b) The course syllabus
c) Tests given  
d) Texts and lab manuals used  
e) Results of classroom visits.

5. Actions of the Committee

Actions of the department of physics Personnel Committee will require an affirmative vote of at least 2/3 of the committee members present. Voting shall be by secret ballot. The person under consideration shall absent himself or herself from the committee deliberations and shall not vote on his or her own case. Any person present for the deliberations, but absent at a subsequent meeting at which voting takes place, retains the right to cast a written ballot on cases he or she has heard.

B. Finance Committee

1. Composition

The finance committee of the Department of Physics shall consist of at least four faculty members of the department or the entire department if there are fewer than 5 members in the department. A quorum shall consist of 2/3 of the members. The committee chair will be elected each year by a majority vote of the faculty.

2. Budget Preparation

When the College requests a budget from the Department, the finance committee is responsible for advising the department chair about the budget.

3. Disbursement of Funds

Each year, after the available amount is known, the finance committee is responsible for developing a spending plan for that year. An amount sensibly based on recent departmental expenditures must be reserved for basic departmental operations. The remaining amount shall be divided into three categories: 1) teaching equipment, 2) faculty and department computing equipment, 3) research and travel funds. The following guidelines will apply to categories 2 and 3:

Computing equipment. Allocation of funds in this category will be a finance committee decision. The finance committee must strive to provide up-to-date computing equipment for the teaching labs. When a faculty member needs a new office computer, he or she must first explore non department funding sources. Ordinarily, each department member cannot expect to get a new computer more frequently than every five years. When a new office computer is purchased, the old computer will be placed in a teaching lab.

Research and Travel. If the finance committee determines that the budget is large enough, funding will be made available in this category. When research and travel funding is available, a small discretionary amount shall be made available to each full-time department member. Additional amounts may be awarded to individuals on a
competitive basis. A brief proposal, including a budget, must be submitted to the
finance committee in these cases. The finance committee is responsible for setting a
reasonable proposal deadline, and for deciding whether or not to approve proposals.
Money not spent in this category by April 2 will revert to the department general fund.

Additional disbursement policies may be developed by the committee each year.

It is also understood that funds unused by March 17 can be redistributed.

Although it is the committee’s responsibility to decide how each year’s allocation is to
be spent, each expenditure must be approved by the department chair.