



College of Sciences  
Office of the Dean

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Warwick A. Arden  
Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost  
NC State University  
Holladay Hall 102A

September 9th, 2025

Dear Provost Arden,

The Department of Physics is requesting to change its official name from the "Department of Physics" to the "Department of Physics and Astronomy". The College of Sciences supports this request and is submitting it for your consideration.

The department's request seeks to align their department with institutional peers and believes that the change will benefit both their undergraduate and graduate programs. Departments at peer institutions that made a similar name change saw an increase in their enrollments.

The department emphasizes that this change would more accurately reflect their existing programs---in particular, their recently-established interdisciplinary physics concentration in their physics BS---but that they are not proposing to create any new degree programs. In time, additional courses may be offered in astrophysics should enrollment increase.

As part of the process, feedback was solicited from both the College of Sciences' department heads and Associate Deans for Academic Affairs from all colleges. No concerns were raised with either group. A summary of feedback from the ADAAs is given in the attached letter from the Physics department.

Again, the College of Sciences supports this request.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lewis A. Owen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lewis" and last name "Owen" clearly legible.

Lewis A. Owen  
Dean, College of Sciences  
NC State University

Attachment: Name change proposal from Department of Physics

July 14, 2025

Lewis Owen Dean, College of Sciences  
Campus Box 8201  
304 Bureau of Mines  
Raleigh, NC 27695

Dear Dean Owen,

The Department of Physics is requesting to change its official name from the “Department of Physics” to the “Department of Physics and Astronomy”. This request seeks to align our department with institutional peers.

To a large extent, Research I (R1) universities in the US have either separate physics and astronomy departments, or a single department with a combined name. Since NC State historically has maintained a strong astrophysics/astronomy program – currently with approximately nine faculty working in this area – we are proposing this name change to accurately reflect our departmental programs.

We envision that this name change will benefit both the graduate and undergraduate programs. Based similar name changes at both Michigan State University and Purdue University, we anticipate that it will strengthen our astrophysics efforts by enhancing recruitment of students both at the graduate and undergraduate levels. Both of the above-mentioned universities saw significant enrollment increases after their name changes.

We do not plan to create a new major, however recent changes in our degree program that introduced an interdisciplinary BS degree (<https://catalog.ncsu.edu/undergraduate/sciences/physics/physics-bs-interdisciplinary/>) will naturally align with this change – two students graduated this year with an astrophysics concentration. The only possible curricular changes we envision at this time would be additional physics course offerings covering a wider range of undergraduate astrophysics topics should the enrollment significantly increase. There will not be any changes to CIP codes nor course prefixes.

As part of the process, feedback was solicited from both the College of Science’s department heads and Associate Deans for Academic Affairs from all colleges. No concerns were raised with either group. A summary of feedback from the ADAA’s is given below.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,



Paul Huffman  
Professor and Head of Physics  
Associate Director, Triangle Universities Nuclear Laboratory

## **ADAA consultation on proposed name change for physics department.**

Email sent by Alun Lloyd, COS ADAA to ADAA's on 5/29/25. Responses were requested by the end of June.

The Department of Physics is proposing to change its name to the "Department of Physics and Astronomy" to align better with peer institutions. See message below.

Per the university's process, <https://provost.ncsu.edu/instructional-programs/oip-sops/changing-the-name-of-an-academic-department-or-combining-departments/>, Physics has asked me to share this with you.

Please let me know if you have any comments or concerns, or if you feel we should discuss this at one of our meetings. Could we aim to get comments back to me by the end of June? One additional thing I will say is that this name change was discussed as part of the external review that Physics underwent this past semester. Here is what the external review team said on the matter: "Ultimately, this is a department decision. There are clear upsides, for example, other departments report an increase in admission applications following such changes. There does not appear to be any comparable downside."

### **ADAA Responses:**

- Natural Resources (Melissa Pasquinelli): Change makes sense to me! I'll circulate here and will follow up should there be any concerns or comments. (no additional concerns)
- Design (Sharon Joines): Design had no concerns
- Engineering (Graduate, Kara Peters): I have no concerns with this change. Seems like a good change for the department.
- CHASS (James Mulholland): I thought I'd reply to say no objections, and this seems like a sensible change.
- Textiles (Jeff Joines): Looks good and I agree that aligning with what others are doing makes sense. The only question I have is I am assuming you are not changing the prefix for courses. The department name and course prefix does not have to necessarily match.
- Agriculture and Life Sciences (David Crouse): I asked for feedback by tomorrow. All the responses I have received have been very supportive. Last response was June 2. (No additional response was received from CALS.)
- No objections received from the remaining colleges

**North Carolina State University**  
**Routing for On-Campus Approval of a Department Name Change**

This request has been reviewed and approved by the appropriate campus committees and authorities.

**Recommended By:**

\_\_\_\_\_

Council of Deans

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

**Approved By:**

\_\_\_\_\_

Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

**Approved By:**

\_\_\_\_\_

Chancellor

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

## Routing for On-Campus Approval of an Academic Department Name Change

**Type of Action:** Enter "X" for Action Type(s) and list Title and Prefix(s) as indicated

Current Academic Department Name: \_Dept of Physics\_\_\_\_\_

Proposed Academic Department Name: \_ Dept of Physics and Astronomy\_\_\_\_\_

Proposed Effective Date: \_\_ Fall 2025\_\_\_\_\_

Department Contact: \_ Paul Huffman [prhuffma@ncsu.edu](mailto:prhuffma@ncsu.edu), Alun Lloyd [alun\\_lloyd@ncsu.edu](mailto:alun_lloyd@ncsu.edu)\_\_\_\_\_

**Routing of Action:** Indicate date when the following occurs

9/10/2025      ***Completed proposal received***

### ***Proposal moves to the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost's office for routing***

\_\_\_\_\_ Faculty Senate informed  
\_\_\_\_\_ Substantive Change Review Team informed  
\_\_\_\_\_ Council of Deans recommends\*  
\_\_\_\_\_ Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost approves\*  
\_\_\_\_\_ Chancellor's Cabinet recommends  
\_\_\_\_\_ Chancellor approves\*  
\_\_\_\_\_ Vice Provosts informed  
\_\_\_\_\_ University Council informed  
\_\_\_\_\_ Board of Trustees subcommittees informed  
\_\_\_\_\_ Letter sent to SACSCOC after final System approval, if applicable

\* Signature is required on the signature page for the action