



UCF Board of Trustees

Academic Excellence and Student Success Committee

December 5, 2024

Agenda Item

AESC - 1: New Degree Program Proposals – M.S. and Ph.D. in Planetary and Space Sciences

Proposed Action

The Academic Excellence and Student Success Committee is asked to recommend to the Board of Trustees, on its consent agenda, approval of the new degree program proposals for the M.S. and Ph.D. in Planetary and Space Sciences.

Authority for Board of Trustees Action

Board of Governors Regulation 8.011 – Academic Degree Program Coordination and Approval
UCF Regulation UCF-2.040 – Development, Approval, Termination, and Suspension of Degree Programs

Supporting Documentation Included

Attachment A: Overview of M.S. and Ph.D. – Planetary and Space Sciences

Attachment B: Request to Offer New Degree Program – M.S. and Ph.D. in Planetary and Space Sciences*

(Please click the link below to access the full request)

- Request to Offer A New Degree Program – M.S. and Ph.D. in Planetary and Space Sciences:
[Full Request](#)

Facilitators/Presenters

Michael Johnson, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Timothy Letzring, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

Summary of Key Observations/Recommendations

UCF is proposing an M.S. and Ph.D. program in Planetary and Space Sciences. This program builds on the following strengths and contexts:

- Directly advances the State University System's strategic goals across the areas of Teaching and Learning, Scholarship, Research, and Innovation (SRI) and Community and Business Engagement (CBE).
- Ties directly into the state's space economy as it continues to grow and builds on UCF's strength as a strong partner to the space enterprise.
- Advances "Space Technologies and Systems" as the first focus area in the **UCF strategic plan**, *Unleashing Potential*, and is a strategic direction for the state.
- Strong letters of support from area companies engaged in planetary and space enterprises.

Additional Background

- This program replaces and expands upon the existing Planetary Sciences Track of the Physics M.S./Ph.D. program, leveraging the knowledge gained from successfully running that Track for 15 years to broaden its scope.
 - For context, UCF has produced 21 Ph.D. and seven M.S. graduates in the track, along with another seven Ph.D. and nine M.S. graduates in the regular Physics program whose primary research mentors were Planetary Sciences faculty and whose research specialty was planetary science.
- With this improvement from a track to an independent program, future specializations in the program would allow expansion and flexibility to serve the full and rapidly evolving range of interdisciplinary space-science and space-exploration topics.

Implementation Plan

Implementation is planned for Fall 2025. Since this is an already existing track, the program may have existing students decide to change majors. The Board of Governors is expected to take this up at their June 2025 meeting or earlier, if their agenda permits.

Resource Considerations

The fiscal impact of the proposed program is minimal as the expertise and courses to be offered build on faculty already in place at the undergraduate and graduate levels.