



American  
Physical  
Society

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**Kate Kirby**  
*Executive Officer*

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Dr. Gloria J. Gibson, Executive Vice President and Provost  
University of Northern Iowa  
Seerley Hall 1  
Cedar Falls, IA 50614-0707

Dr. Benjamin J. Allen, President  
University of Northern Iowa  
Seerley Hall 20  
Cedar Falls, IA 50614-0705

Craig A. Lang, President  
**Board of Regents**  
State of Iowa  
11260 Aurora Avenue  
Urbandale, IA 50322

Dear Vice President Gibson, President Allen and President Lang,

It has come to our attention that the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) is considering eliminating the physics major at UNI. The American Physical Society hopes that you will reconsider this action in light of the significant role played by UNI in educating high school physics teachers, providing physics education to all of the science and mathematics majors at UNI, and in providing a robust undergraduate physics program.

Physics programs like UNI produce more than just physics majors. This department has contributed significantly to the university in many ways including:

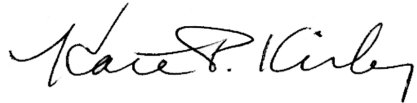
- Educating in-service high school physics teachers (a program specifically recognized in the upcoming report of the National Task Force on Teacher Education in Physics)
- Providing high quality foundational courses in physics for all science disciplines
- Securing substantial external research funding
- Providing undergraduate research opportunities
- Producing peer-reviewed research including several papers (according to our searches) in some of the most prestigious journals (not an easy task from a department with large teaching loads)

Physics has never been a large field by numbers of majors, but has arguably had a significant impact despite this size. Individual physicists have contributed substantially to the economic vitality of the nation, and K-12 teachers of physics prepare and excite the next generation of science and math professionals. UNI has had a significant role in helping physics teachers from Iowa gain content and confidence. Closing this program would significantly impact the role the University would be able to play in helping to educate the citizens of Iowa.

Our discussion with faculty members at UNI have convinced us that they are committed to working to improve enrollments while maintaining the quality of its offerings. As a part of this, the American Physical Society has agreed make resources available to UNI to address enrollment concerns. The Education Division of the American Physical Society has extensive experience developing strategies for improving enrollment in physics departments. Theodore Hodapp, our Director of Education and Diversity, has agreed to invite two members of the UNI Physics Department to a workshop that will address improving physics-enrollment this summer (10-12 June), and to assist them in developing a written action plan to improve enrollments. An action-oriented plan will allow UNI to improve its offerings, and build an even stronger effort to work with the local community in educating: teachers, a scientifically literate population, and students pursuing science-based careers.

We recognize that budgetary challenges facing UNI and other universities force difficult choices. We welcome the opportunity to work with the UNI Physics Department and administration to provide a high quality physics program for Iowa and the surrounding region.

With regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kate Kirby". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and "C".

Kate Kirby  
Executive Officer