Memo to the Chair and the Long-range Planning Committee from the Atomic and Condensed Matter Groups

The review committees, both internal and external, have identified the present group structure of the department as unworkable. While possibly pitched too strongly, there is substantial merit to this criticism. Furthermore, the perception by the outside world that there is tribalism in the department is itself harmful. The department has traditionally responded to criticism of this kind by saying that additional resources from the outside would solve all the problems. It is very likely at this stage that further repetition of this argument would be counterproductive. For these reasons, we propose a thoroughgoing restructuring of the department, replacing entirely the present group structure. This proposal is partly modeled on the structure of the Chemistry department.

The department would be divided into three Divisions.

These would be High Energy Physics comprising roughly the present Particle and Nuclear groups, Astro/Plasma Physics, comprising roughly the present Astro, Space, and Plasma groups, and Low Energy Physics, comprising roughly the present Condensed Matter, Atomic, and Biophysics groups. Of course individual faculty may choose as they wish which division to belong to. Each division would elect a head to serve a two or three-year term.

The divisions would take over some of the responsibilities of the groups. For example, hiring would be done by the divisions. Infrastructure presently organized by groups, such as research computing and organization of group offices, would also be taken over.

The divisions would take over some of the responsibilities of the department. Courses would be designated as general or as belonging to a division. Each division would undertake to contribute some faculty for general courses but would make their own assignments for the courses designated as belonging to their specialty.

Allocation of resources: financial, space, etc., at the department level would be done by an executive committee consisting of the chair and three members appointed by the division heads. Other committees would be either general, appointed entirely by the chair (as at present), or interdivisional, similar to the executive committee.