

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

*Regents Communication*

**ACTION REQUEST**

**Subject: Report of Faculty Retirement**

**Action Requested: Adoption of Retirement Memoir**

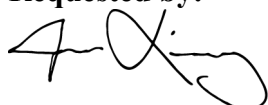
**Carl Akerlof, Ph.D.**, professor of physics in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, retired from active faculty status on May 31, 2024.

Professor Akerlof received his B.A. degree from Yale University in 1960 and his Ph.D. degree from Cornell University in 1967. He joined the University of Michigan faculty in 1969 as an assistant professor, and was promoted to associate professor in 1972, and professor in 1978. Professor Akerlof's service includes multiple terms on the departmental executive committee, decades of leadership in introductory and advanced laboratory instruction, and service to the American Physical Society's International Scientific Affairs Committee, including a 1974 sabbatical trip to the Soviet Union. This work was recognized with a fellowship in the American Physical Society and the 2008 University of Michigan Distinguished Faculty Achievement Award.

Professor Akerlof has been an innovative leader in high-energy particle physics and astrophysics for many decades. At every stage in his career, his ability to design, construct, and operate innovative new instruments has been at the center of his work, enabling him to pioneer new fields of study and create high-quality learning experiences for students. Early in his career, he led particle physics experiments at Fermilab and the Stanford Linear Accelerator Facility. In the early 1980s, his interests turned to astroparticle physics, and he played a key role in imaging and building the first ground-based gamma ray telescopes. These instruments enabled the first detections of TeV gamma rays from astrophysical sources from the Crab Nebula to active galactic nuclei, opening a new field of astronomy. Always seeking new frontiers, Professor Akerlof shifted to optical astronomy, where he helped to launch the study of gravitational microlensing and the large-scale study of astrophysical transients. In the mid-1990s, he designed and built the first version of the Robotic Optical Transient Search Experiment, or ROTSE, which detected the first prompt optical counterpart of a gamma-ray burst in January of 1999, along with tens of thousands of other time-varying objects in the sky. Subsequent versions of ROTSE stationed telescopes across the globe, in Turkey, Texas, Namibia, and Australia, discovering hundreds of additional gamma ray burst afterglows and a new class of super-luminous supernovae. Most recently, Professor Akerlof has brought his expertise in designing innovative instrumentation to bear on the search for dark matter as a member of the LUX-ZEPLIN experiment.

The Regents now salute this distinguished scientist by naming **Carl Akerlof, professor emeritus of physics**.

**Requested by:**



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**Jon Kinsey**  
Vice President and Secretary of the University

**May 2024**