

Berkeley astronomer in sexual harassment case to resign

Exoplanet hunter Geoffrey Marcy also quits \$100-million hunt for extraterrestrial life.

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NIKLAS HALLEN/AFP/Getty Images

Astronomer Geoffrey Marcy is known for his work on exoplanets.

Astronomer Geoffrey Marcy is stepping down as a faculty member at the University of California, Berkeley, following revelations that a university investigation found he had sexually harassed multiple students between 2001 and 2010.

A 14 October e-mail from Gibor Basri, interim chair of the Berkeley astronomy department, said that Marcy had initiated the process to leave the faculty. Marcy has been a professor there since 1999.

“We believe this outcome is entirely appropriate and have immediately accepted his resignation,” Berkeley chancellor Nicholas Dirks and executive vice-chancellor Claude Steele said in a statement.

Marcy also held an adjunct position at San Francisco State University, which that university terminated after learning of the Berkeley investigation findings.

The sexual harassment case involving Marcy concluded in June but was [made public only last week](#) in a report by BuzzFeed News. The disclosure triggered outrage among astronomers, and many Berkeley astronomy faculty members and students called for Marcy to leave the department. The university had not disciplined Marcy for his past actions but arranged an agreement going forward in which he could be subject to disciplinary actions if he again violated Berkeley's sexual harassment policy.

“I think the university betrayed the trust and safety of its students by not removing Marcy earlier,” says Laura Lopez, an astronomer at Ohio State University in Columbus. She led [an effort](#) in which more than 260 astronomers complained to *The New York Times* about its early coverage of the case.

“His resignation ensures that he cannot harm more students in the future, but the damage he has caused and the culture which enabled it to happen still need to be addressed,” Lopez adds.

Marcy has also resigned as principal investigator of the Breakthrough Listen project, a US\$100-million initiative [announced in July](#) to search for signs of intelligent life in the Universe.

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Updates

Updated:The story has been updated to reflect that Marcy is no longer an adjunct professor at San Francisco State University.

Updated:The story has been updated with a statement from the University of California, Berkeley.