

Keivan G. Stassun, Ph.D.
Stevenson Professor of Astrophysics
Director, Frist Center for Autism & Innovation
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Prof. Keivan Stassun holds the Stevenson chair in Astrophysics, and holds secondary appointments in Computer Science and in Management, at Vanderbilt University, where he has received an NSF CAREER award, a Cottrell Scholar award from the Research Corporation for Science Advancement, an HHMI Professor award from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, and a Ford Foundation Fellowship from the National Academy of Sciences. Stassun is a member of the leadership team for NASA's Ultraviolet Explorer (UVEX) and Advanced X-ray Imaging Satellite (AXIS) space telescope missions, served as a co-investigator for NASA's Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) mission, chairs the executive committee of the Sloan Digital Sky Survey, serves on the National Academy of Sciences Space Studies Board and Divisional Committee for Engineering & Physical Sciences, and recently served on the National Academy of Sciences Decadal Steering Committee for Astronomy & Astrophysics. An elected Fellow of the American Physical Society, the American Astronomical Society, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Sigma Xi, and an elected Member of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, his research on stars and exoplanets has appeared in more than 600 peer-reviewed journal articles, with an emphasis on understanding the fundamental physical properties of stars and extrasolar planets. From 2004 to 2016, he served as founding director of the Fisk-Vanderbilt Masters-to-PhD Bridge Program, which has become one of the nation's top producers of PhDs to underrepresented groups in the physical sciences. Having trained more than fifty PhD students and postdoctoral scholars from diverse backgrounds, Stassun is a leader and advocate and exemplar for training the next generation of American talent in STEM fields. He has served on NSF's Committee for Equal Opportunity in Science and Engineering, is a recipient of the American Physical Society's Nicholson Medal for Outreach, has been named Mentor of the Year by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and has been honored with a Presidential Award for Excellence in Science Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring.

Since 2017, Stassun serves as founding director of the Frist Center for Autism & Innovation in Vanderbilt's School of Engineering, focused on advancing science and engineering through the engagement and workforce development of autistic individuals and those with other forms of neurodiversity, and has awarded more PhDs to autistic scientists and engineers than any other program. In 2023, Stassun was appointed to a six-year term on the National Science Board, in 2024 was named a MacArthur Fellow, and in 2025 received the National Medal of Science.

