

2012/2013 JCSA Report to CASCA

Opening Remarks

The most recent JCSA meeting was held on December 7-8 2012 at the CSA Headquarters in Saint-Hubert and the Université de Montréal. Attending from the JCSA were Laura Parker (chair), David Lafrenière, David Naylor, JJ Kavelaars, Peter Martin (via WebEx) and Laura Ferrarese (ex-officio, CASCA president). Jean Dupuis, Denis Laurin, Genevieve Marchand, Alain Ouellet, Karl Saad, Jean-Claude Piedboeuf, Sylvie Béland and Martin Lebeuf represented the CSA. In addition, parts of the meeting were attended by René Doyon and John Hutchings.

The next JCSA meeting will be held at UBC immediately following the CASCA 2013 meeting.

The recommendations from the December 2012 meeting follow below, however, there have been several developments since this meeting. In particular the situation with the Euclid mission and the potential for Canada to be involved with ground-support has been rapidly evolving (see recommendation #3 below). At the time of our meeting there appeared to be an opportunity for Canada to be engaged in this dark energy mission at a relatively low cost via joining PanSTARRS and providing 'Euclidization' of PanSTARRS data at the CADC. This path to joining Euclid now appears unlikely but there are a number of Canadians exploring alternate routes for Canada (or some number of Canadian PIs) to join the Euclid mission. The JCSA is following these possibilities closely and communicating regularly with the LRPIC. It would make sense for the JCSA chair to be a member (ex-officio at least) of the LRPIC, as is the chair of the GAC.

It is clear the budgets at the CSA are under enormous strain and it is not easy to identify funding for new projects. The JCSA looks forward to working with the CSA on budget priorities for space astronomy. The Canadian astronomical community has a list of space astronomy priorities outlined in the LRP and we recognize that funding any of these projects will be challenging. Even with cost reductions or mission cancellations the current budget is insufficient for ambitious future projects. Without the injection of new funds the space astronomy program in Canada will be left behind.

In line with our previous recommendations and the feedback from mission PIs, the JCSA continues to encourage a "cradle-to-grave" funding philosophy for all missions. This philosophy will guarantee that major investments are realized and that there is a maximum science return from each mission. Cradle-to-grave funding includes supporting the science team from launch through to a post-operations phase.

December 2012 Recommendations

Canada's Involvement with JWST

Recommendation #1: The JCSA strongly recommends immediately extending the contracts for those involved with FGS/NIRISS for a minimum of 2 years.

Recommendation #2: The JCSA requests that the CSA develop a strategy to minimize the impact of new restrictions on travel funding, especially for government employees. In the case of JWST, if another solution cannot be found, the JCSA suggests transferring funds to René Doyon's contract to cover travel of FGS/NIRISS science team members.

Future Missions

Recommendation #3: The JCSA strongly and urgently recommends that the CSA identify the funding needed to ensure Canada's involvement in Euclid. We also request that the CSA keep the JCSA informed of all PanSTARRS/Euclid negotiations in a timely manner.

Recommendation #4: The JCSA recommends that the CSA continue support for the Canadian-led CASTOR project by funding a phase 0 or related technology study, to followup the thorough and well-received concept study.

Recommendation #5: The JCSA recommends that the CSA continue to support SPICA development until the mission decision is made by JAXA.

Current Mission Support and Budget Priorities

Recommendation #6: The JCSA recommends that SPIRE be funded for the expected 3 years of post-ops activities, in line with Herschel-HIFI and other international partners.

Recommendation #7: The JCSA recommends that the CSA wind down MOST operations as soon as possible so that the funds can be redirected to higher priority space astronomy projects.

Capacity Building

Recommendation #8: The JCSA recommends that, before the next Clusters AO, the CSA revise and broaden the scope of strategic areas so that they be more inclusive of space astronomy activities.

Recommendation #9: The JCSA recommends that the CSA provide feedback to all applicants who applied for FAST funding.

Recommendation #10: The JCSA recommends that the CSA investigate alternative capacity building avenues for space astronomy via new programs (reallocating FAST funds) or a broader AO for the next round of FAST grants.

Recommendation #11: The JCSA recommends that the CSA reintroduce the SSEP program as soon as possible.

Concluding Remarks

The JCSA is composed of Laura Parker (chair), David Lafrenière, David Naylor, Peter Martin and JJ Kavelaars. Laura Ferrarese, Samir Boughaba and Greg Fahlman are ex-officio members in their role as CASCA President, NSERC representative and NRC/NSI GM, respectively.

Laura Parker will end her term as JCSA Chair following the May JCSA meeting and the completion of the next set of recommendations. Andrew Cumming has been identified as a new member of the JCSA, and it is now critical to identify future members in addition to a new chair.

On behalf of the JCSA,



Laura Parker

April, 2013