

Report from the Equity and Inclusivity Committee

3 December 2019

Membership

The EIC membership has changed. Bryan Gaensler and Margaret Ikape have rotated off the committee. Terry Bridges and Hilding Neilson have joined the committee. Clare Higgs of U Vic is our new graduate student representative. Kristine Spekkens is no longer our Board representative, but is remaining on the committee. Rene Doyon is now our Board representative. Henry Ngo was on parental leave for part of the fall, but has now returned to work. He will be leaving the committee in January, so we will plan to add another postdoctoral fellow at that time.

Current membership:

Brenda Matthews (chair)

Terry Bridges

Rene Doyon (Board representative)

Emmanuel Fonseca (postdoc)

Daryl Haggard

Clare Higgs (graduate student)

Hilding Neilson

Henry Ngo (postdoc)

Kristine Spekkens

LRP Report and White Papers

The EIC finalized its report to the LRP panel on the EIC's activities since its inception in 2015.

The main effort in August and September was the submission of the EIC's White Paper for the LRP panel, led by Kristine Spekkens. The EIC make 5 recommendations for CASCA to the LRP panel. There were several other white papers that focussed on EDI issues. The authors of those white papers are now also members of the EIC and we look forward to their input.

The EIC has been in touch with the graduate student group at U Victoria planning a climate survey targeting graduate students. Their survey is still in development. We have sent them the content of our climate survey at their request.

The recommendations of the EIC's white paper are:

1. The CASCA Board should commit to creating and maintaining a comprehensive national database of its members. This database is of urgent importance since it would allow searches for members by other members and by the public, and would also meet the needs of the community in collecting anonymous self-reported demographics data. The CASCA Board

should direct funding toward hiring professionals to create a modern database that serves this dual purpose, and that its members can trust and use easily.

2. The CASCA Board should prioritize updating the CASCA Mission and Ethics statements and creating a Values Statement and a Code of Ethics. These documents would provide the basic framework for CASCA-developed EDI initiatives, and should therefore be self-consistent and enforceable; this may require funding to accomplish.

3. The CASCA Board should prioritize EDI training within the CASCA membership. We recommend that committee members complete EDI training as part of their service; Canadian-made training programs that touch on many relevant EDI issues are freely available and their uptake would be a no-cost first step. The CASCA Board should also consider funding EDI-focussed plenary sessions that bring in trained EDI experts at CASCA Annual General Meetings.

4. The CASCA Board should endorse the exploration of a national mentoring strategy for early-career astronomers. Mentorship programs have been successfully implemented in other communities, and would build relationships across the country and enhance support for students, postdocs and junior faculty outside their home institutions by pairing them with a mentor closely aligned with their personal or professional experiences.

5. The CASCA Board should commit to the principles of the Dimensions Charter, and encourage its members and their institutions to do the same. CASCA should encourage members at the chosen Dimensions pilot project institutions to participate in that study over the next two years and then assess the outcome with respect to its own EDI values and goals.

Presentations of the EIC re: the LRP 2020 process

Kristine Speakers presented the activities of the EIC (including results from the demographics survey) to the CASCA AGM by invitation from the LRP panel in mid-June. This presentation focussed on the content of the EIC report to the LRP panel. She also presented at the Montreal Town Hall on 1 November 2019. This presentation focussed on the recommendations to the LRP panel made by the EIC.

Climate Survey Update

The report to the Board on the Climate Survey is in progress and we plan to submit it to the Board in the coming weeks. Some information will remain Board-eyes only.

Demographics Survey Update

A report on the demographics survey will be prepared for the Board in the new year, but the essentials have already been reported to CASCA at the last AGM and are included in the EIC's LRP report.

LOC Guidelines for CASCA meetings Update

The EIC's re-examination of the new document is still TBD.

IAU 358: Astronomy for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The Chair attended the first IAU Symposium on EDI in November 2019. She was the only faculty level attendee from Canada. Five graduate students from the University of Toronto attended. In all there were 150 attendees to the meeting, which was 5 days and ranged from state of the profession to public outreach (with an eye toward accessibility and inclusion). Many of the talks stressed the challenges and successes of astronomy as a gateway science in the developing world. Many contributions discussed efforts of outreach that were borne of a desire to share the sky or share astronomy with adults, not necessarily to encourage to encourage children to STEM.

There were several interesting take-aways from the meeting, which I will discuss further with the EIC. Some of the most interesting were related to accessibility issues, such as access to astronomy for those who are hearing, and particularly visually impaired. We may think of astronomy as a purely visual science but there were several blind astronomers at the meeting who discussed how they access data. Presentations from several countries highlighted efforts to create auditory data presentation tools.

Brenda made a presentation about the state of the profession in Canada, including past presidents of CASCA (leadership examples had come up repeatedly at the meeting), the current demographics of the community, our experiences with demographics, the climate survey and the LRP process and recommendations.