

Acura Advisory Committee for the SKA report 2019-2020

Members: Don Brooks, Séverin Gaudet, Julie Hlavacek-Larrondo, Doug Johnstone, Erik Rosolowsky, Gregory Sivakoff, Kristine Spekkens, Dave Stevens, Ingrid Stairs, Rob Thompson, and Gilles Joncas (chair). Observers: Sara Ellison (CASCA), John Hutchings (LRPIC), Michael Rupen (NRC), Luc Simard (NRC)

The AACS met four times since April 2020. There had been no meetings for the year prior from lack of a committee chair. Rob Thacker chaired the April meeting. Joncas was appointed as chair by the ACURA Board early June 2020.

Meetings and actions had become urgent on the part of the AACS. The SKA was and is moving apace with the passing of major design and financial reviews and the ongoing ratification of the treaty by many countries. All those milestones contributed to implementing the start of the construction phase around mid-2021.

Every meeting starts with updates provided by Simard/Rupen on the international and national fronts, Spekkens as Scientific Director for Canada, Stairs on the science and engineering aspects and Gaudet on the SKA Regional Centers. Roughly, the last half of the last three meetings were spent on developing the best strategy for approaching and convincing the Canadian Government that our country should become a full member in the SKA project. These discussions brought the following actions:

- The design and writing of a document promoting the SKA that would be used to inform (and sway!) government officials and university administrators in our lobbying efforts. The document is designed so it can be improved with time as the project evolves.
- Develop a network of university champions who would contact their administrators so they can discuss knowingly about the project among themselves and with high level decision makers in NRC and Government.
- Strategy discussions with the Coalition for Astronomy and ACURA's Institutional Council.
- Weekly meetings with NRC-HAA.
- Updating the skatelescope.ca web site.
- A first meeting with Government officials on the week of 30 November.

I will conclude by recognizing the enormous amount of work put in by Kristine Spekkens and Gregory Sivakoff and the contribution of many others so we could move effectively at a high pace.

Gilles Joncas
Chair
AACS