

Canadian Astronomical Society Soci t  Canadienne d'Astronomie

Meeting of the Board of Directors via videoconference

Minutes for Dec. 9 (Part 1) and Dec. 15 (Part 2), 2020

Present:

Sara Ellison (President)
Samar Safi-Harb (Vice President)
Judith Irwin (Secretary)
Lewis Knee (Treasurer)
Ivana Damjanov (Director)
Laura Parker (Director)
Etienne Artigau (Director)
Julie Hlavacek-Larrondo (Director)
Rob Thacker (Past President)

1. Adoption of Agenda

Moved by Lewis and seconded by Laura to accept the agenda. Passed.

2. Approval of minutes of the November 10, 2020 meeting

Moved by Julie and seconded by Etienne. Passed.

3. Review of Action Items

Resolved items:

—Three issues of Cassiopeia are still missing (Spring + Summer, 1997, and summer, 1976). In spite of requests on the CASCA exploder, they have not been found, and this item will not be pursued further.

—The new joint CAP/CASCA dues rate for students has now been implemented.

In Progress items:

—Endowment use policy is being investigated by Lewis Knee.

—Updating the Core values and ethics statement is being handled by Rob Thacker.

—The mandate of the GSC is being worked on by Rob Thacker with the Chair of the GSC.

Transferred items:

—Consideration as to how Westar lectures can best connect with underserved communities will be shifted to the LCRIC (see President's report, below).

New items:

—Updates to the Annual General Meetings guidelines will be made by Samar Safi-Harb, in light of the new need to have some virtual meetings.

4. President's Report

SKA

The coalition had its first Ottawa meeting a couple of weeks ago. The most pressing issue is for funding and membership in the SKA. Duncan Raynor is close to setting up a follow-up meeting with finance, currently slated for the first week in January, 2021. He will also have meetings with others in the office of Navdeep Baines (Minister of Innovation, Science, and Industry).

From the ACURA institutional council meeting, it is important to find 'University Champions' who could meet with their Vice Principals, Research. This has already happened at several universities, including UBC and UofT.

The SKA Canada website has been significantly updated (see skatelescope.ca). ACURA provided the funding for this. A useful resource is a 4-page brochure (click at bottom right of the SKA Canada home page) for people communicating with their universities or broader networks.

TMT

Discussions in Hawaii continue. CATAAC (CASCA-ACURA TMT Advisory Committee) discussions have been focussed around the need for effective and accurate communications. Please see the CATAAC report for more information.

Decommissioning of two telescopes is underway: the UH-Hilo teaching telescope, Hoku Kea (to be completed in 2023), and the Caltech Submillimeter Observatory (to be completed in 2022).

Rebranding of the LRPIC

The Long Range Plan Implementation Committee (LRPIC) will now be known as the LRP Community Recommendation Implementation Committee (LCRIC). The inaugural chair will be Chris Wilson (3 year term).

NDRIO (New Digital Research Infrastructure Organization)

The change from Compute Canada to NDRIO is moving along. An extensive consultation process with the community is underway and there has been a call for white papers. Several white papers are being prepared now, including one from the Canadian Astronomy Data Centre (CADC), Kristine Spekkens for the SKA, and Rodrigo Fern ndez at the University of Alberta. A survey will also be sent out.

Astronomy and Colonization Course

Sara took this course, offered by Hilding Neilson, and her section is now complete. The dozen students in her section all seemed to find it valuable and worthwhile. Hilding will solicit official feedback for the Board, from his students.

Temporary transfer of CASCA Board Directorship

Sara and all of the Board wish to thank Julie Hlavacek-Larrondo for her service as Director and to wish her well during her maternity leave in the new year. Nicole St. Louis will temporarily replace Julie during this time.

ACURA Communications Officer

Arising from CATAC discussion for the need for improved communications, ACURA has committed funding for a part-time Communications Officer on a trial basis for one year. A Communications Officer could be an important spokesperson for all of ACURA's projects. An experienced potential individual has already been identified.

Because of the complication of doing this through universities plus the fact the universities take overheads, ACURA would like the funding to move through CASCA. According to our Treasurer, there are no tax red flags associated with doing this. We have the ability to hire people and the process should be straightforward. The treasurer will speak to the Executive Directory of ACURA (Don Brooks) about the details. Kim Venn is the Institutional Council member leading the coordination of the Communications Officer position.

If the Communications Officer could remain beyond the one-year trial, it would be useful for CASCA to contribute a nominal amount so that the officer could broaden his/her portfolio by including the overarching community-engagement goals of the LRP.

5. The 2021 Annual General Meeting (AGM)

This meeting will be held virtually and we are expecting about 400 'attendees'. Note that is CASCA's 50th anniversary in 2021 (1971-2021)!

A variety of platforms are being planned for the meeting. For example, Whova for the website, Slack for posters, Remo for the banquet, and Gathertown. We expect a link to be up on the CASCA website sometime in January.

For AGM 2021, so far, committed funds that have been raised are:
CFHT \$1,400, Dunlap \$5,000, ACURA \$1,000, SKA \$1,000, iREx \$1,000, CITA \$1,000, and TMT \$1,400.

The Vice President has proposed, and the Board agrees, that we change the absolute values for registration fees into percentages. The working percentages for members are as follows:

Student members: 40%

Non-members: 150%

Students non-members: 50%

Undergrads: 20%

RASC members: 33%

Retirees: 33%

The CASCA Board wants the Online Organizing Committee (OOC) to arrange the finances through a university, rather than through CASCA. The OOC has now engaged UBC to handle this.

There was discussion as to whether fees should be waived for undergraduates. However, our graduate students do pay fees and waiving fees for non-CASCA members does not seem like the right balance. The fee level is also not a huge financial barrier.

Speakers have now been picked for the 2021 AGM. There is a good list of invited speakers, diverse, and with good representation across the country. An exciting development is that Andrea Ghez (Nobel Prize in Physics, 2020) will deliver the Hogg Public Lecture.

Note that the 2022 AGM is being planned for Waterloo (possibly an in-person/hybrid mix), and the 2023 AGM will likely be in-person in Penticton, assuming that all goes well, re COVID.

6. Committee Reports

(a) Secretary's Report

As of Dec. 10, 2020, the CASCA membership consisted of

- 3 honorary members
- 7 corporate members
- 381 ordinary members (includes regular, PDFs, retired, and joint CASCA/CAP)
- 12 associate members
- 183 student members

For a total of 586 members.

However, only 388 members are 'in good standing', meaning that they are fully paid up in their dues, including for 2020-21. There are 120 members who are 1-year in arrears and 78 who are 2-years in arrears. Lapsed members who are 2 years in arrears will be contacted in the new year.

Moved by Samar and seconded by Sara to accept the Secretary's report. Passed.

{**Note:** The Secretary's Report was delivered by email, and also accepted by the Board via email.}

(b) Treasurer's Report

Financially, we are in solid shape. The most recent membership drive was very successful from which we received \$48K. Our normal income from dividends held up well, and our current operating balance is \$80.1K.

Nearly 90% of our dues come in by Paypal. Our donations also bounced back to close to normal levels (they were down last year because of Paypal technical difficulties).

In terms of donations, which are tax deductible, we could be doing better. We should specify specific goals or causes for donations in order to engage our membership. The graduate students could be of assistance here, for example, is there a project, such as a telescope, that could benefit a particular school? The RASC model in which they accept donation for their robotic telescope has worked well. In the case of CASCA, our new LRP has a number of initiatives that could use such funding.

The recent audit by Wilkinson & Company in Kingston went smoothly. Historically, our rate of return on investments has been $\approx 4\%$. Because of COVID, we are below this, but now there appears to be a slow recovery.

Moved by Samar and seconded by Etienne to accept the Treasurer's report. Passed.

(c) Vice President's Report on Subcommittees

In addition to reporting on committees, the Vice President introduced several more committee-related issues:

—*Sustainability Committee (web pages)*

The Sustainability Committee has a great deal of material that they would like to post, as well as links, etc. While the Board would like to encourage this initiative, we need to be careful that whatever is on CASCA web pages is in accordance with the CASCA website policy, and is in accordance with recommendations in the LRP.

A subdomain is certainly acceptable, but in collaboration with the CASCA VP and our webmaster.

It may be time to update the look and feel of our current CASCA website, over all, which has not been done for a decade. This is an agenda item for a future meeting in consultation with the webmaster.

—*Letter to NSERC from Sustainability Committee*

The Sustainability Committee, in collaboration with the Astronomy representative of the CAP NSERC committee (A. Sills), have drafted a letter to the NSERC executive committee requesting changes to NSERC by-laws which would encourage individuals to report greenhouse gas emissions associated with their research activities.

The Board supports the Sustainability Committee's initiative with respect to the letter, but notes that details are broader and require a separate discussion.

—*Postdoc committee*

The postdoc (PDF) committee is a new committee and have pointed out that they tend to fall between the cracks when it comes to who takes care of their COVID-related issues. They want to send a letter to NSERC outlining how COVID has impacted them, for example, hiring freezes, funding, the fact that they cannot attend conferences, etc. An extra year of (new) funding, i.e. additional funding coming into the system) would help significantly. The Board is supportive, but the letter needs some rephrasing before it is ready. Samar assisted with the rewording.

The PDF committee would also like to compile a database of all PDFs in Canada to help them with networking. However, this cannot be done on the CASCA website because not all PDFs are CASCA members. Such a database would also be difficult to keep current, and permission would have to be received from everyone because of privacy concerns. The Board would like to encourage the PDF committee to move forward with this initiative if they think it would be useful, but separately from CASCA.

This prompted a short discussion on legal liability, with the thought that having a lawyer on the CASCA Board could be very helpful. It would also be useful to have legal counsel for the revised ethics statement. Rob will look into this.

—*Equity and Inclusivity Committee (EIC)*

The EIC would like Board direction on setting priorities for LRP recommendations. This is deferred to the new LCRIC.

—*Heritage Committee*

The History of Canadian Radio Astronomy book has been delayed because of COVID. The new submission date is the end of the calendar year. They are encouraging us to update our entries in the AAS AstroGen project.

—*CATAC*

The President is meeting with them in December regarding the posting of their report. She communicated our feedback via email.

7. LRP Discussion

An updated timeline is now on the website.

8. Any other Business

None.