

## CASCA Awards Committee Report April 2021

### Current Committee Membership:

|  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| Adrian Liu (McGill)                            | Term ends: 30 June 2021 |
| Rodrigo Fernandez (Alberta)                    | Term ends: 30 June 2022 |
| Ruobing Dong (Victoria)                        | Term ends: 30 June 2022 |
| Laura Fissel (Queens)                          | Term ends: 30 June 2022 |
| Jayanne English (Manitoba)                     | Term ends: 30 June 2023 |
| Ivana Damjanov (Saint Mary's)                  | Term ends: 30 June 2021 |
| Sam Lawler (Regina)                            | Term ends: 30 June 2022 |
| Dennis Crabtree (ex officio as 2021 AGM Chair) | Term ends: 30 June 2021 |

The committee chair (Adrian Liu), one voting committee member (Ivana Damjanov), and the ex officio member (Dennis Crabtree) are scheduled to rotate off the committee. Replacement of the *ex officio* member will be automatic since the slot will go to the 2022 AGM Chair. However, some recruitment efforts will need to be made to replace Liu and Damjanov.

One factor to consider is that none of the current committee members are French speakers. This year we were lucky in that all nomination packages and PhD theses were in English, and so this was not a problem. However, in previous years we have had to evaluate theses written in French. This can certainly happen again, making it a good idea to recruit a committee member who speaks French. One possibility might be to recruit one of the replacement committee members from Quebec. Doing so maximizes the chances of having a French-speaking committee member while maintaining geographical diversity (since Liu is based at McGill).

### Awards

The following prizes were awarded this year:

- Martin Award for Mid-Career Achievement: **Sara Ellison**
- Qilak Award for Astronomy Communications, Public Education and Outreach: **Jayanne English**
- Harvey B. Richer Gold Medal for Early Career Research in Astronomy: **Renée Hložek**
- R.M. Petrie Prize Lecture: **Heino Falcke**
- J.S. Plaskett Medal: **Ziggy Pleunis**

### Reflections and Suggestions

This year, we received four nominations for the Martin Award, three for the Qilak Award, five for the Richer Medal, six for the Plaskett Medal, and one for the Petrie Lecture. Aside from the Petrie Lecture (more on this below), this was considered a healthy number. Gender balance in the pool of nominated candidates was also better than in previous years, with eight out of 19 nominees being women. Of the eventual winners, it is noteworthy that 60% are women.

The progress seen in getting a more diverse set of nominees and prize winners may (possibly) be partly attributed to new measures that were put in place this year:

- A guide to nomination letters was written by the committee and placed on the CASCA website.
- A detailed timeline and guide to the committee's procedures were placed on the CASCA website.
- The committee chair met with members of the Equity and Inclusivity Committee and the Nominating Committee to discuss potential nominees that we should encourage to apply. Following this, the committee chair contacted these potential nominees (or their potential nominators) and arranged for nomination packages to be sent.

That said, most of the nominees were **not** one of the actively solicited ones. Thus, it should be emphasized that much of our excellent gender balance this year **was simply a result of luck**. This underscores the fact that next year's committee will need to continue efforts targeted towards a more inclusive prizes and awards selection process. Additionally, diversity along other "axes" should be pursued more aggressively.

One problematic area was the Petrie Lecture. Despite the relatively easy nomination process for that award, only one nomination was received. This led to an awkward situation where many deserving lecturers could not be selected (given the committee's rules to consider only nominated candidates) and resulted in a complaint from a CASCA member. When the Petrie lectureship is awarded again two years from now, the committee chair should consider an active solicitation of nominations if the rate of nominations is low leading up to the deadline.

As is often the case, deliberations for the Plaskett medal were extremely difficult, with many outstanding nominations that were essentially indistinguishable in quality. Because of this, the committee felt compelled to mention the other finalists in the prize announcement, and we recommend that this practice continue.

A final (strong) recommendation from the committee is that the next time CASCA is able to endow a new award, this award should target postdoctoral scholars. The current array of awards given by CASCA is such that postdocs are left out (unless they are able to win the Richer Medal, which is difficult). This is seen as a problem given that postdocs are at precisely the career stage where recognition is important and makes a big difference to one's future prospects.