

Canadian Astronomical Society Société Canadienne d'Astronomie

52nd Annual General Meeting via videoconference

Minutes for May. 13, 2021

Present: Board Members:

Sara Ellison (President)
Samar Safi-Harb (Vice President)
Judith Irwin (Secretary)
Lewis Knee (Treasurer)
Laura Parker (Director)
Étienne Artigau (Director)
Ivana Damjanov (Director)
Nicole St-Louis (Director)
Rob Thacker (Past President)

The meeting opened at 3:18 p.m. EDT with 133 participants present. The maximum number of attendees present at some time during the meeting was approximately 173. Note that 40 members are required for a quorum.

In the following, [Name1/Name2] refers to the name of the mover (Name1) and the name of the seconder (Name2).

The president reminded everyone that only members in good standing (MIGS) can vote.

1. Adoption of Agenda

The Agenda was sent to all members in good standing on May 7, 2021.

MOTION to adopt the agenda [Bryan Gaensler/ Renée Hlocžek]

VOTE:

93% YES

7% ABSTAIN

PASSED.

2. Adoption of minutes of the 2020 AGM [Ellison]

A link to the 2020 AGM Business Meeting minutes is given on the agenda which was circulated on May 7:

https://casca.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/AGM_business_meeting_May27_20_draftminutes.pdf

MOTION to accept the minutes of the previous meeting [Greg Sivakoff/Pauline Barmby]

VOTE:

82% YES

18% ABSTAIN

PASSED.

3. Special Resolution on undergraduate membership [Thacker]

A copy of the following resolution was sent to the CASCA membership on April 12, 2021.

RESOLVED as a special resolution that CASCA's by-laws be amended as follows and that these amendments be filed with the Registrar of Corporations to take effect following the Annual General Meeting, May 13th 2021.

1. By amending 2.1.4 to read as 2.1.4(a), with text: "2.1.4 (a) Persons currently enrolled in a program of graduate studies in astronomy or astrophysics at a recognized university, and continuing therein, may be elected as Student members (graduate), regardless of whether they meet the criteria for full membership. They shall be entitled to attend the Corporation meetings and to present papers." 2. By adding an additional clause 2.1.4(b), with text: "2.1.4 (b) Persons currently enrolled in a program of undergraduate studies in astronomy, astrophysics or physics at a recognized university, that are currently participating in (or have within the last year) astronomically related research either as a summer student, research assistant or during production of a thesis, may be elected as Student members (undergraduate), regardless of whether they meet the criteria for full membership. They shall be entitled to attend the Corporation meetings and to present poster papers."

MOTION to adopt the special resolution [Rob Thacker/Mark Richardson]

DISCUSSION:

What would be the cost for students? Likely a small amount, but this is a policy decision and is distinct from the resolution itself. Chemistry and engineering should really be included as well.

FRIENDLY AMENDMENT to change the wording to include related fields, as follows [Margot Mandy/Viktor Khalack]

"2.1.4 (b) Persons currently enrolled in a program of undergraduate studies in astronomy, astrophysics, physics, or related science areas at a recognized university, that are currently participating in (or have within the last year) astronomically related research either as a summer student, research assistant or during production of a thesis, may be elected as Student members (undergraduate), regardless of whether they meet the criteria for full membership. They shall be entitled to attend the Corporation meetings and to present poster papers."

hmm I also have Nathalie Ouellette as a seconder later on but I think that Viktor seconded right away

VOTE ON FRIENDLY AMENDMENT:

95% YES

1% NO

4% ABSTAIN

PASSED.

FURTHER DISCUSSION:

Clarification that undergraduates would also have voting rights. Some concern was expressed about this and the resulting possible change in direction of CASCA. It was noted that undergradu-

ate members of the AAS do have voting rights. Some members were concerned about the possible lack of commitment of undergraduates. Others indicated that similar concerns were raised when graduate students were accepted into CASCA. There would be two categories of student membership: student/undergraduate, and student/graduate.

An additional FRIENDLY AMENDMENT was raised to correct the phrase ‘...that are participating in ...’ to ‘...who are participating in ...’. This was passed by a show of hands, rather than a formal vote.

VOTE ON MAIN MOTION:

89% YES

3% NO

10% ABSTAIN

PASSED.

4. President’s Update [Ellison]

As noted in an announcement on Whova, the meeting’s opening statement made by the president is attached at the end of these minutes.

Coalition for Canadian Astronomy

The Coalition consists of the CASCA president (Sara Ellison), the Executive Director of ACURA (Don Brooks), an industry representative (Guy Nelson) and our lobbyist (Duncan Raynor).

On an international scale, the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) is moving along rapidly with almost no slippage in schedule. The InterGovernmental Organization (IGO) came into effect in January. As of May, the IGO has begun handling all facets, including assets and personnel issues.

The design phase is completed and construction is likely to start on July 1.

Canada has yet to make a formal commitment and we have been relegated to observer status, with no voice at the council table. If Canada fails to commit by July of this year, there is significant risk that contracts that we have provisionally been awarded are at risk – especially the very important correlator contract. SKA was not explicitly listed in the Federal budget; that said, the government is fully briefed and understands the risk.

The Coalition’s lobbying efforts were delayed last summer by COVID. However, through the winter and spring, the Coalition met with the federal Chief Science Advisor’s office, with representation from the office of the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, as well as with the Finance Department. There is also an upcoming meeting with Minister Champagne’s office.

Long Range Plan (LRP)

There is a dedicated LRP session at this meeting tomorrow. In summary, the English text version of the LRP was publicly released on the CASCA website. Since then, the efforts focussed on graphics and typesetting, with a pdf release of the English and French versions in April. The final step is to complete the printing by the end of June. Distribution of the hard copies to politicians and agency representatives (e.g. Canadian Space Agency, NRC) will be handled by Duncan Raynor. ACURA (the Association of Canadian Universities for Research in Astronomy) will handle distribution to universities, their vice presidents, etc.

A huge thank you goes to Byan Gaensler, Pauline Barmby, and the LRP panel, for an enormous amount of hard work on CASCA's behalf.

Implementation of the LRP

Following release of LRP 2010, the committee responsible for implementing the plan was called the LRPIC (Long Range Plan Implementation Committee). The focus was mainly on facilities on the ground and in space.

However, the new LRP has broad-ranging recommendations, including Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI), sustainability, etc. Therefore the LRPIC has been replaced with the LCRIC (LRP Community Recommendations Implementayion Committee). The inaugural chair is Christine Wilson. The membership is invited to the meeting tomorrow to hear more about this.

New Digital Research Infrastructure Organization (NDRIO)

Canada's NDRIO is ramping up to replace Compute Canada and CASCA is an Associate Member. Catherine Lovekin is CASCA's representative and Erik Rosolowsky is a member of the new Research Council.

In April, NDRIO opened a call for 4 director positions on their Board. Their next AGM is in September of this year.

Coordinated Graduate Student Offers Deadline

Recall the statement on the CASCA webpage (https://casca.ca/?page_id=279) in which our society agreed on a recommended coordinated deadline for graduate student offers, namely that they should be made no earlier than February 28 of any given year. The Canadian Association of Physicists (CAP) would also like to promote this, although there has been some delay because of COVID. Thank you to Carter Rhea for his contributions in supporting and promoting this idea.

The Canadian Space Agency (CSA)

Aaron Boley and Samantha Lawler prepared an extensive report on Mega-Constellations which they sent to the Government of Canada and the Canadian Space Agency in response to their call for feedback on the future of Canadian space exploration. This report can be found at: <https://arxiv.org/abs/2104.05733>.

Aaron and Sam have been approached by Global Affairs Canada and will be giving them a 1-hour briefing on May 18.

International Astronomical Union (IAU)

CASCA participated in the 'Telescopes For All' initiative of the IAU. Our national IAU coordinator, Sharon Morsink, together with Rob Cockcroft and CASCA's Westar team identified a school in Tuktoyaktuk (Mangilaluk School) and submitted a proposal. There were 174 applications from 34 countries and the school in Tuktoyaktuk was one of the 17 successful proposals, see <https://www.iau.org/news/announcements/detail/ann20026/>

This telescope has recently arrived in Tuktoyaktuk and the school looks forward to using it once the sky becomes sufficiently dark.



DISCUSSION:

Discussion centered on the graduate school deadlines and the difficulties in meeting them over a range of disciplines. Everyone recognizes that the situation is not perfect but may improve with CAP's support.

5. Secretary's Report [Irwin]

The Secretary's Report (circulated earlier today) will soon be on the CASCA website in its entirety. In summary (updated to May 18, 2021) the CASCA membership is 581, consisting of 2 Honorary members, 7 Corporate members, 386 Ordinary members, 14 Associate members, and 172 Student members. Of these 546 are members in good standing and 35 are one-year in arrears in their dues payments. This is a considerable improvement over one year ago when there were 103 members who were one-year in arrears.

Many thanks to our administrator, Jessica Marsano, for assistance with the Secretary's Report.

MOTION to adopt the Secretary's Report [Judith Irwin/Éienne Artigau]

VOTE:

94% YES

6% ABSTAIN

PASSED.

Judith then presented one page tributes to the six members who had passed away over the past year (and one from the previous year): Tom Bolton, Roger Cayrel, Paul Feldman, Gilles Fontaine, Lloyd Higgs, and Amelia Wehlau. One minute of silence was observed.

6. Treasurer's Report [Knee]

The Treasurer's Report (circulated earlier today) will soon be on the CASCA website in its entirety. In summary, CASCA is in good shape financially. Three-quarters of our income is from membership dues, which have not changed from last year. The remainder is from investment income. Most of our membership uses Paypal for dues payment. Our opening balance for the 2021-22 year is CAN\$73.8K. Investments have rebounded after having taken a dip in 2020.

Many thanks to our administrator, Jessica Marsano, for assistance with the Treasurer's Report.

MOTION to adopt the Treasurer's Report [Lewis Knee/JJ Kavelaars]

VOTE:

95% YES

5% ABSTAIN

PASSED.

7. Appointment of Auditor [Knee]

The current auditor is Wilkinson Company LLC, 785 Midpark Drive, Suite 201, Kingston ON, K7M 7G3

These auditors were happy with the smoothest audit they have ever seen, again a tribute to the professionalism of our administrator.

MOTION to re-appoint the current auditor for the upcoming year [Lewis Knee/Nicole St-Louis]

VOTE:

85% YES

1% NO

14% ABSTAIN

PASSED.

8. Committee reports [Safi-Harb]

There are 15 CASCA committees and all of their reports have been posted on the CASCA committee pages (link from https://casca.ca/?page_id=59).

In brief, our new committees are:

LCRIC (see ‘Implementation of the LRP’ under #4 above), chaired by Christine Wilson.

Sustainability Committee, chaired by Chris Matzner, and which has shifted from an ad-hoc committee to a standing committee.

Post-doc Committee, chaired by Toby Brown, and which has shifted from an ad-hoc committee to a standing committee.

Thank you to the chairs who are stepping down after this AGM: Stefi Baum (Ground-based Astronomy Committee), Adrian Liu (Awards Committee), and Toby Brown (Post-doc Committee).

9. Nominations to the Nominating Committee [Ellison]

The current Nominating Committee consists of Stephanie Côté and Renée Hloczek. There were no elections this year, and both Stephanie and Renée have agreed to continue in their role. A call for any additional nominations was made to the floor, without any other names being proposed. Therefore, both Stephanie and Renée are accepted by acclamation.

10. Future CASCA Meetings [Safi-Harb]

The 2022 AGM, hosted by Waterloo, will be the first ever to be a hybrid meeting, i.e. both in-person and remote. Will Percival and Donna Hayes are Chairs.

The 2023 AGM (in person) will be hosted by DRAO Penticton, with Roland Kothes as Chair.

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business

12. Adjournment

MOTION to adjourn [Gene Milone/Laura Parker]

VOTE:

99% YES

1% NO

PASSED.

The following statement was given by CASCA President, Sara Ellison, before the official welcome of the 2021 AGM:

Welcome everyone.

My name is Sara Ellison, President of CASCA.

It's great to see so many people here today – even if it's on zoom.

Let me say thank you to everyone who put in such long hours organizing this AGM.

It takes an enormous amount of work.

And I know we all greatly appreciate everyone's efforts.

In a moment Dennis will open the meeting with an official welcome.

But as CASCA President I wanted to start by addressing an important issue that has caused a lot of concern among our members.

As many of you will know, in preparing for this conference there was a genuine misunderstanding between the Board and the OOC regarding the planning of the session on Indigenous cultural awareness. This misunderstanding has had very serious consequences.

What is abundantly clear to me -- and to everyone in the CASCA leadership – is that in planning this conference we failed to meet the expectations you had for discussing critical issues regarding Indigenous rights.

And for that, we are profoundly sorry.

I want to apologize again to Hilding Neilson and to the committees involved in the organization of this meeting.

I also want to apologize to you – the CASCA membership -- for our failure to meet your needs at this AGM.

Clearly, we need to do better.

And we will.

To that end, let me outline initial steps we are taking:

First, the CASCA Board has reaffirmed its commitment to fully implement the recommendations regarding Indigenous rights in our Long-Range Plan.

We agree that implementing these recommendations is critically important work to the future of astronomy in Canada.

And that work involves all of us.

For that reason, the Board requested the session on Indigenous cultural awareness that is taking place later today and has made efforts to incorporate discussion about Indigenous rights throughout the meeting program.

In particular, the LRP session on Friday invites community discussion on the process of consultation and implementation of the LRP's recommendations.

Second, following the AGM, the CASCA Board will meet the Equity and Inclusivity Committee and the LRP Community Recommendations Implementation Committee to build a robust consultation and implementation plan for the LRP recommendations.

You have made it clear that as part of that plan you want more opportunities to participate in an open discussion about Indigenous rights.

And I can promise you that we will work as hard as we can to meet that expectation.

At the end of the day, I know that we share the same aspiration, even if sometimes we fall short -- as the CASCA leadership has here.

We are all scientists. And we are passionate about scientific discovery.

But we are also members of the larger community.

At our best, the work we do and the discoveries we seek should never come at the expense of human rights and the struggle for social justice.

On behalf of the CASCA Board, I ask you to accept my apology and to measure us by the actions we take going forward.

Thank you for listening.

The summary below was given to members attending a follow-up session on Monday May 10:

- Early on in the planning of this AGM the Board identified an education session on Indigenous cultural awareness as a high priority for the community. This would be a first for CASCA, driven by our commitment to this topic and the Indigenous-focused LRP recommendations.
- The EIC was consulted over the Board's desire to plan this cultural awareness session. The EIC supported/approved the Board's suggestion and agreed that the Board would take leadership on this session, whilst the EIC took ownership for the separate EDI session. Having established that division of responsibility, the Board proceeded with its planning with the OOC.
- Dennis Crabtree (Chair of the OOC) was asked to organize the Indigenous cultural awareness session in consultation with the Board. The OOC agreed with the Board that this would be an excellent resource for us to offer the community. Dennis organized for Bob Joseph to speak, as well as distribute his book free of charge.
- The Board's vision and proposed scope for Bob Joseph's talk was to be in the format of a talk and discussion specifically on the topic of Bob's presentation. Since Bob indicated that he does not do panel discussions, the format was set to be a Q&A. The session was deliberately planned for the first day, both to give it a high billing, and to orient the community for the discussions that would come later in the week (such as at the TMT and LRP sessions).
- Our motivations for this scope and format were several-fold:
 - We wanted to make the most of our time with Bob Joseph (as an external invited speaker) and use this as an education/training session for our community.
 - Depending on the session content, reactions to Indigenous awareness/education can vary from inspired to distressed. Indeed, experts delivering Indigenous awareness training recommend taking some personal time to reflect and recover and we aimed to provide the same opportunity to our community
 - Finally, there was the practical consideration that we were trying to build-up to the big discussions later in the week, by starting with this awareness session, then moving on to the very specific topic of TMT and finally with the broad-reaching LRP discussion on Friday.

- About a month ago, through Samar (in her role as CASCA VP and liaison with the OOC), we became aware that Dennis was planning a panel discussion immediately after Bob's presentation to discuss LRP priorities. We had concerns about this for reasons I have just outlined. We met with Dennis to clarify our originally proposed scope and its motivations. However, by that time, Dennis had already reached out to Hilding asking him to prepare some terms of reference. We asked Dennis to get back to Hilding in order to clarify our originally proposed scope for a broad cultural awareness/education session. Dennis agreed, so that we would revert back to the original plan of a session dedicated to interactions with Bob and a Q/A session. In recognition of the work that Hilding had done, we also invited him to be involved in moderating the session. We asked Dennis to communicate all of this to Hilding.
- Despite our intention to be transparent to Hilding about all of these points, Dennis erroneously communicated the motivation as pressure on the schedule. This was a genuine misunderstanding between Dennis, Samar and myself.
- In order to rectify the mis-communications, I reached out to Hilding directly offering to meet with him, but he requested to communicate by email. I therefore provided a written account detailing in full the explanation of the events, along with an apology, as we fully understood his position and sincerely regretted the outcome.
- Dennis also recently sent Hilding a personal apology explaining the errors on his side.

In summary, there was a genuine misunderstanding between the Board and the OOC on the planning of the Indigenous awareness session that only came to light about a month ago. The organization of this AGM has required the navigation of logistical challenges that are completely new to CASCA meeting planning. In addition to the virtual format, we have expanded the scope far beyond our usual science staples. This has entailed organization by numerous parallel committees and working groups. Since future CASCAs will continue to embrace these wide-reaching societal aspects, we need to learn from our experiences this year. We are already working to improve the AGM planning guide to facilitate next year's organization, and we welcome input on that process.