

Canadian Astronomical Society Société Canadienne d'Astronomie

Meeting of the Board of Directors via videoconference

Minutes for June 14, 2021

Present:

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)

1. Adoption of Agenda

Moved by Lewis and seconded by Nicole to adopt the agenda. Passed.

2. Approval of minutes of the May 4, 2021 Board meeting

Moved by Laura and seconded by Ivana to approve the minutes of the May 4 Board meeting. Passed.

3. Approval of Draft Minutes of May 13, 2021 AGM Business Meeting

Moved by Ivana and seconded by Laura to approve the Draft AGM minutes. Passed. Note that these minutes are now posted on the CASCA website and are voted on by the entire membership at the next AGM Business Meeting.

4. Terms of Reference (ToR) for Graduate Student Committee (GSC) [Rob]

Rob has checked with the Chair (Kristine Spekkens) of the Equity and Inclusivity Committee (EIC) regarding possible overlap between the ToRs of the GSC and the EIC. The EIC Chair agreed that some overlap was okay. Thus the ToR for the GSC is complete and ready for vote.

Moved by Sara and seconded by Nicole to accept the ToR of the GSC. Passed. Samar will ensure that these will be posted on the GSC webpage.

5. Next steps for LRP action items [Sara]

Sara summarized for everyone the LRP recommendations that are to be lead by the Board, and also priorities for the coming year. Several recommendations require coordinations with other

committees. Sara has a live tracking document to help guide the process; editing permission currently lies with Sara and Chairs of the committees. Considerable coordination is underway so that progress can be made in a fair and efficient way.

Sara identified three specific recommendations that can be discussed today so that a Board lead can be found to help expedite them.

1. Review of Westar lectureship.

This item falls clearly into Education and Public Outreach (EPO). Since Laura is Board rep on that committee, she has volunteered to take the lead on this portfolio. Laura will communicate with Rob Cockroft (member of the EPO committee) about this item and will discuss the issue with the entire EPO at their next meeting.

2. Values Statement Working Group.

Several meetings have already been convened with the EIC, and a Sustainability Committee member should probably also be involved. Note that ‘working groups’ are not meant to be exclusive, but rather to streamline the process.

Considerable discussion then followed about the order in which the statements should be tackled, i.e. there is an Ethics Statement, a Mission Statement, a Values Statement and a Code of Conduct. The discussion veered towards starting with the Mission Statement, which should be quite short, followed closely or in parallel with the Values Statement. Laura will take on the lead on the mission statement, in consultation with Rob.

3. Training regarding racism and Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI).

To proceed on this issue, it is important to consult with the EIC and also to contact other groups or institutions who already have experience with EDI training. Ivana is the Board rep on the EIC and so will take the lead on this portfolio.

6. Outreach/Communications [Laura]

The EPO is keen to ramp up our social media presence. With more content, there will be more impact.

However, it is important to ensure that only designated individuals have access to the various platforms (e.g. twitter, facebook, youtube). It is clear that these people must be CASCA members, and that they agree to the Social Media Policy. Laura will discuss this with the EPO Committee and discuss how to consolidate the social media communications strategy.

7. Committees [Samar]

These items were presented in the context of a Terms of Reference (ToR) document that is being prepared by Samar to give to all committee Chairs.

New Members of Committees

There have been deviations in how membership is determined, committee-to-committee. We need a uniform approach so that committee membership can be fairly and equitably determined. Chairs of committees and Board members may not know all potential candidates, arguing that a general call to the CASCA membership could be fruitful.

It will have the most impact to have a single call indicating which committees will have upcoming

vacancies and to ask for expressions of interest from CASCA members. It must be clear that an expression of interest does not guarantee membership because names need to be forwarded by committee Chairs to the Board for approval. This also means that there needs to be a clear rubric for deciding which names go forward from the Chairs. Therefore a statement as to what qualifications/expertise are most desirable should be included in the call (an example is if the Ground-based Astronomy Committee had no one with expertise in radio astronomy).

Regarding extensions to terms, the document should state that ‘normally, the term is 3 years’. Anyone who is currently on a committee has already been approved by the Board. Extensions, then, do not require a Board vote, but at minimum, should be run through the Vice President. Anyone who shifts from being a committee member to committee Chair, should normally do so within their normal 3 year term.

A good time to identify which committee members need to be replaced would be when each committee submits their December report. This would leave sufficient time to make a call and vett volunteers before the annual AGM, because that is when membership usually changes.

Public Statements made on behalf of CASCA

Public statements regarding the position of CASCA on any item should not be made by committee members or Chairs without Board approval. See also #6 above.

Communication between Committees and the Board

There was discussion about communication channels between committee Chairs and the Board and whether or not joint meetings or more frequent meetings would be of benefit. Currently, the VP meets with Chairs a few times per year and written reports to the Board are submitted twice per year. If there are specific issues requiring the input of specific Chairs, they can be called upon, in an ad hoc fashion, to attend specific Board meetings. However, Board meetings are very frequent now and quite lengthy. Currently, communication channels appear to be working well and no immediate change is anticipated. Therefore, a formal arrangement for extra meetings need not be included in the document for Chairs at this time.

Development of the ToR Document for Chairs

Samar will put the draft ToR into a Google Document for sharing and further editing, as needed, by the Board.

8. AGM Guidelines [Samar]

There was limited time to discuss this issue at this Board meeting. However, the Board registered no opposition to the earlier proposed change of using a ‘percentages’ model for upcoming AGM fees.

9. Item raised at AGM – Statement about Laurentian University

A CASCA member at the recent AGM was wondering whether CASCA would make a statement about the closure of Physics at Laurentian University. Note that there is a Canadian Association of Physicists (CAP) statement here:

<https://www.cap.ca/publications/cap-news/closure-of-physics-programs-at-laurentian-university/>

Given the rather late timing of such a statement, limiting its impact, and the fact that there are no CASCA members at Laurentian University, the Board decided not to make a statement at this time.

10. Any Other Business

None presented.

11. Adjourn

Moved by Nicole and seconded by Laura to adjourn. Passed.