

JOINT COMMITTEE ON SPACE ASTRONOMY (JCSA) REPORT FOR 2005

JCSA meets twice a year, once around the time of CASCA and once in Nov/Dec in St. Hubert. This report is mainly a summary of discussions at the May 2005 meeting.

Committee Members: Douglas Scott (Chair, UBC), Carmelle Robert (Laval), Samar Safi-Harb (Manitoba), David Naylor (Lethbridge), Barth Netterfield (UofT, apologies), Paul Charbonneau (UdeM), Marten van Kerkwijk (UofT). Because the meeting was held immediately after CASCA there were a number of observers present for part of it.

Paul Charbonneau (UdeM) and Marten van Kerkwijk (UofT) attended for the first time and this was Carmelle Robert's last meeting. Douglas Scott and Barth Netterfield will rotate off after the next meeting.

Ex-officio members are: Alain Berinstain (CSA), David Kendall (CSA), Denis Laurin (CSA), Kate Wilson (NSERC, Marie-Christine Fournier attended), Greg Fahlman (HIA/NRC, apologies) and Jim Hesser (CASCA).

GENERAL ITEMS

Probably the biggest change that was discussed was a move away from "unsolicited proposals" and towards proposals which are formally reviewed following an Announcement of Opportunity (AO). There are 2 relevant AOs being prepared, a "General AO for Space Astronomy" (which would be for concept studies) and a "Special Opportunities AO for Space Sciences" (which would be for projects which are beyond the study phase). While this move is seen as a good one in principle, there are several issues which remain to be sorted out, e.g. how will such proposals be reviewed, will the AOs be sufficiently frequent, how onerous will the process be for proposers?

In order to help with longer term planning for missions (i.e. to select the "next JWST"!) and following the success of the short presentations made at the CASCA/CSA Town Hall meeting it was recommended that a workshop be organised in the near future. This was put on hold temporarily, since the CSA cannot run such a meeting while there is an active AO. But such a meeting is expected to be organised by mid-2006.

The CSA Fellowship Program ran for the first time in 2005, with Douglas Scott being the astronomer on the selection committee. 2 Fellows were selected, one of whom is in astronomy. The competition will be continued, with 2 more Fellows expected to be selected in 2006. The application deadline was moved earlier, and all qualified people are encouraged to apply.

It was recommended that a message be sent to the CASCA email exploder asking for volunteers to serve on JCSA.

COSPAR 2008 will be held in Montreal, and there is a request for interest in astronomy-related sessions. The contact is Gordon Shepherd (York U.).

PRESENTATIONS OF CURRENT AND FUTURE PROJECTS

There were short presentations from the following list of ongoing or proposed missions (in the order they were presented): NuSTAR; High Energy Transients; Herschel HIFI; Planck HFI; SPIDER; Lunar Telescope; CADC; BRITE; FUSE; UVIT; JWST; MOST; Planck LFI; Herschel SPIRE; SPICA; and BLAST. The status of the ongoing projects (Herschel, Planck, CADC, FUSE, UVIT, JWST, MOST, BLAST) was discussed, and recommendations were made, as well as some feedback generated for the new proposed projects. However, in the light of the anticipated AOs, there were no explicit recommendations for new funding without review.

The last JCSA report contained a summary for each ongoing mission. A few highlights of the status update since then are: MOST is operating well and generating exciting science results; a potentially devastating descope of the Tunable Filter on the Fine Guidance Sensors on JWST was averted through a great deal of hard work on the part of the Canadian team; Herschel/Planck is now scheduled for launch in late 2007, with most of the hardware now built and being tested, and Canadians maintaining a strong scientific presence.

The next JCSA meeting will be in early December at CSA HQ, St. Hubert, QC.