

Minutes of the teleconference held on Wednesday June 15, 2011

Swiss Commission for Astronomy
(SCFA)

1) Call to Order

The chair, G. Meylan, calls the teleconference to order at 2:00 pm.

Attendance at the teleconference :

Present : P. Jetzer, G. Lake, M. Meyer (replacing M. Carollo), G. Meynet, D. Pfenniger, W. Schmutz, M. Steinacher (guest from SER), S. Udry, and G. Meylan (chair).

Excused : W. Benz, G. Beutler, M. Carollo, T. Schildknecht, and F.-K. Thielemann.

2) The Second SCFA Student Summer School in 2012

During its last meeting in March 2011, the SCFA had decided to ask for submissions of proposals for the Second SCFA Summer School for PhD students in Switzerland. Such proposals can be sent anytime directly to the secretary of the SCFA, Claire Schatzmann claire.schatzmann@epfl.ch. No proposal has been submitted, so far, for the organization of this Second Summer School, which should be held normally in Summer 2012.

This lack of proposals is of course a clear indication of the already large offer of schools, workshops, and conferences, at both national and international levels. Each student in Switzerland has plenty of opportunities to attend such events. However, the spirit of these SCFA schools should differ strongly from the other events in offering to PhD students in Switzerland a triple opportunity via a set of block courses : (i) to learn through each school about a different field of astrophysics, (ii) to gain ECTS credits, and (iii) to meet and know other PhD students from Swiss Universities, namely, EPFL, ETHZ, UniBas, UniBe, UniGe, and UniZh.

After some suggestions and discussions, the SCFA concludes that (i) we should keep the SCFA Summer Schools separated in time from the very successful Saas Fee Courses, (ii) we should advertize the SCFA Summer Schools more efficiently, in order to trigger more proposals and to recruit more students from all Swiss universities mentioned above, and (iii) we shall organize an SCFA Summer School each Summer for which we shall have received a good proposal !

3) Swiss representative on the ESO Scientific Technical Committee (STC)

The current term of Didier Queloz as Swiss representative on the STC, for the period 2009-2011, comes to an end in December 2011. After a brief discussion, the SCFA concludes unanimously to propose Didier Queloz for a second and last term, for the period 2012-2014, in accordance with the statutes.

4) CHAPPS organized in a way similar to CHIPP

The CHIPP (Swiss Institute of Particle Physics) is extremely well organized and efficient. It is especially true when considering the important administrative and organizational tasks completed by Jean-Pierre Ruder, recently retired from SER.

Should our CHAPS (College of Helvetic Astronomy Professors) be organized in a similar way? Are we, astronomers working in Switzerland, suffering from a lack of organization? There is at least one major difference between these two communities: the CHIPP community is about ten times larger than the CHAPS one.

After some discussions, the SCFA reaches the general consensus that our smaller community interacts satisfactorily, via the SCFA and the CSR, among a few other entities. The writing of the *Roadmap for Astronomy in Switzerland 2007-2016* is another excellent proof of the good interactions and of the capability of the Swiss astronomical community to reach consensus on major projects such as the E-ELT, which was recognized as the highest priority in ground-based astronomy for the Swiss astrophysics community. It is concluded that our small community can be easily called for a round-table meeting any time it is needed and that yet another layer of organization may not be needed.

5) Miscellaneous

None.

6) The teleconference is adjourned at 2:50 pm.