

Minutes of the teleconference held on Wednesday April 22, 2009
Swiss Commission for Astronomy
(SCFA)

1) Call to Order

The chair, G. Meylan, calls the meeting to order at 10:15 am.

Attendance at the meeting :

Present : P. Jetzer, G. Lake, D. Pfenniger, M. Steinacher (guest from SER), S. Udry, and G. Meylan (chair).

Excused : W. Benz, G. Beutler, G. Burki, M. Carollo, M. Güdel, W. Schmutz, F.-K. Thielemann,.

2) ESO DG to visit SER in Bern

On Tuesday 1 September 2009, in Bern, the ESO DG, Tim de Zeeuw, will meet our Secretary of State for Education and Research, Mauro Dell'Ambrogio. The meeting will be about the future project of the E-ELT and will be attended by various representatives of our Finance and Foreign Ministries.

The SCFA decides to write a letter to Mr. Dell'Ambrogio in order to emphasize the fact that the E-ELT has been recognized as the first priority project in astrophysics in the "Roadmap for astronomy in Switzerland 2007 - 2016" signed by CHAPS (College of Helvetic Astronomy Professors), i.e., all professors of astrophysics and astronomy working in Switzerland.

A draft of the letter will be circulated among the members of the SCFA before being sent to SER in late August 2009, just before the above mentioned meeting.

3) One action item from the roadmap : Summer school 2010

The first Summer school for PhD students in Switzerland will be organized in Summer 2010 by F.-K. Thielemann and G. Meynet. Although F.-K. Thielemann cannot participate in this teleconference because of another important commitment, he has sent a clear statement that both organizers are fully committed to the preparation of this event. They will provide the SCFA, by the end of June 2009, with some information about the dates, the locations, the

logistics, the speakers, and the schedule of this event. We look forward to seeing the happening of this event which should and, consequently, will be a success !

3) Letter of intent for the multi-annual MAP program 2012-2015

The SCFA has identified three main points of activities which will be submitted to MAP for later discussion in the framework of the multi-annual MAP program 2012-2015 :

(i) Given the importance for Swiss astrophysics of the PhD students Summer school, to be organized from 2010 on, following a recommendation from the “Roadmap for astronomy in Switzerland 2007 - 2016” , the SCFA asks MAP for a yearly support of CHF 15,000. This will help the organization at the level of accommodation and travel expenses, and will allow the possibility, e.g., to attract speakers from foreign countries.

(ii) The celebration in 2009 of the 400th anniversary of the first astronomical observations by Galileo Galilei with a telescope can already be declared as a success. Numerous events organized by professional and amateurs astronomers have attracted large crowds. A large fraction of the grand-public is aware of this “International Year of Astronomy 2009” (IYA2009). The SCFA is willing to build on the momentum created by the IYA2009. The SCFA asks for CHF 20,000 in order to create a long-term educational program directed towards high-school students, in order to promote astronomy and astrophysics among young girls and boys. We shall not replace teachers : a special effort will be done in order to provide teacher with very high quality teaching material. Incidentally, this is also an answer to another recommendation from the “Roadmap for astronomy in Switzerland 2007 - 2016”.

(iii) During the last five years, the number of professors working in astrophysics in Switzerland has grown significantly, however, the number of IAU members has decreased. This last effect is a consequence of the IAU membership census, organized by the SCFA, and the new IAU membership rules, which are stricter than before. With all these new astrophysicists, we may, nevertheless, expect some increase of IAU members. This is a mere warning that in the coming years, Switzerland may have to upgrade its IAU contribution from about CHF 15,000 to 23,000, which would correspond to the next category of IAU membership.

4) Miscellaneous

Nothing.

5) The teleconference is adjourned at 10:50 am.