

# STUC Report: October 2017

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## Abstract

The Space Telescope Users Committee (STUC) is the primary avenue for communication between the *Hubble Space Telescope* program and the user community. The committee meets twice a year. The present article summarizes the main topics discussed in Fall 2016 and Spring 2017.

## Recent Events

The STUC met at the Institute on October 20 and 21, 2016 and May 4 and 5, 2017. The committee considered a number of issues:

- *Hubble and Webb*: the STUC discussed the funding of *Hubble* proposals in the context of the upcoming operations of the *James Webb Space Telescope* (*JWST* or *Webb*). The committee noted that *Hubble* is currently highly productive and scientifically complements *Webb*. They strongly endorsed healthy funding of *Hubble* General Observer (GO) and Archive (AR) programs in the future. They also recommended that the Institute establish good communications between the STUC and the JWST Users Committee (JSTUC), which has its first meeting on September 2017. There are clearly strong synergies between both missions that should be exploited to the highest degree possible. The STUC agreed that *Hubble's* current orbit distribution among small, medium and large proposals would be appropriate for the initial cycle(s) of *Webb* observations, but noted that this would be an issue that might merit active reconsideration in the future.
- *Long-term operations of the Cosmic Origins Spectrograph (COS)*: the COS far-ultraviolet (FUV) detector becomes depleted through use, leading to significantly decreased sensitivity at specific locations. In other respects, COS is functioning nominally and offers the possibility of extensive use into the 2020s. With that in mind, the STUC discussed options for maximizing the scientific impact over an extended lifetime. The STUC endorsed the *Hubble* Mission Office study that recommended a hybrid approach that supports a limited number of operational configurations in the short term, limiting detector damage, coupled with the future option of developing a new detector location (LP5) and/or returning to past positions. Under the revised operating procedures, COS retains the full range of science capabilities at the expense of some reduction of efficiency in some modes, with an expectation that FUV observations can be extended through 2023.
- *Proposal selection systematics*: the STUC has been closely involved in monitoring the analysis of systematic factors in proposal success as a function of Principal Investigator (PI) gender originally identified in 2014. The committee has been supportive of the actions that have been taken to shift the focus in the submitted proposal from the PI to the proposal team and to anonymize the proposal submission process. The committee encourages maintaining the modifications in the proposal format, with an increased focus on well defined review criteria throughout the proposal review. The STUC is highly supportive of involving external expert consultants in the proposal review.
- *Proprietary time*: the committee recognized that more rapid data access can impact the scientific productivity of *Hubble* in its final years. Consequently, the STUC re-stated their

support for setting a default proprietary period of six months for small and medium programs.

Full details on the committee's recommendations are given in the meeting reports, linked from the *Hubble* STUC website, [www.stsci.edu/institute/stuc](http://www.stsci.edu/institute/stuc).

### **Personnel Changes**

Professors Hsiao-Wen Chen (Chicago) and Jenny Greene (Princeton) rotated off the STUC following the May 2017 meeting, Hsiao-Wen stepping down as chair. We thank them both for their service. Professor Keren Sharon (Michigan) takes over as chair, and Professor Rupali Chandar (U. Toledo) will be joining the STUC at the next meeting, which will be held on November 6 and 7, 2017. The full committee membership is linked from the *Hubble* website, [www.stsci.edu/institute/stuc/membership](http://www.stsci.edu/institute/stuc/membership).