



## Advisory Board Minutes

7/12/12

### Present:

Prof. Warrick Couch (Swinburne) **WC** (via teleconference)

Prof. Quentin Parker (Centre Director, MQAAAstro) **QAP**

Prof. Anne Green (University of Sydney) **AG**

**Prof Bob Frater (Chair) BF**

### Apology

Prof. John Lattanzio (Monash) **JL**

Prof. Clive Baldock (Dean, FoS, MQ) **CB**

Prof. Stephen Thurgate (MQ) **ST**

Prof. Jim Piper (VC research, MQ) **JP**

### 1. Minutes and Action Items from last meeting

#### ERA

ERAs Announced and congratulations on MQ Astronomy getting a rating of five – the only 5 rated astronomy group in NSW

- General board discussion of the impact of our ERA 5 ranking at a high level. This could be of more psychological and reputational benefit and not necessarily monetary
- ERAs apparently round to the nearest integer so 4.9 goes to 4 (AG).

#### Meeting intervals

- Agreed to meet twice in the first year but only met once due to delayed MQAAAstro start.

#### Strategic Planning Day

- SWAT Analysis
- This was done. QAP has notes in a folder and plans to publish on the web early in the New Year.

#### Space Allocation

- Physics & Astronomy department moving to E6B
- HoD has allocated space and astronomers are in one area and QSci Tech and Quantum are in a different area of the floor plan. All MQAAAstro HDR students, postdocs and academics in same area.
- Research Centre directors were going to get a shared double office but in QAP's case it was an internal office and QAP wanted one with external windows so got a smaller one

- There are meeting rooms nearby

### **Strategic Vision**

- needs to consolidate where we are
- get more MQ support
- stronger links to CASS

### **Peer Reviewed outputs KPI**

- Several KPIs have been moderated to more reasonable levels now

### **Telescope time**

- highly successful, included in annual report

### **AAO Mentored Teaching**

- Andrew Hopkins has been in charge of finding interested astronomers and providing modest opportunities for lecturing experience on campus
- 6 AAO astronomers interested and maybe use a 6 lecture model

### **Clearer budget**

- Done

### **Advisory Board Report**

- QAP, WC and BF to discuss how to handle advisory board report.
- Not necessary as a glossy bound item but will be distributed as required to appropriate bodies in the university which is a mandated requirement of every research centre.

## **2. Annual Report**

QAP summary of Annual Report.

- Our first full year as a research centre and second year of funding has been an exceptionally strong year.
- Updated with the ERA result.

**Advisory board recommendation: Use the ERA result to maximum benefit within the university.**

### **ARC Grants**

- 11 ARC grants with at least 1 MQ CI on them and quite a few are led by MQ CIs.
- 2 future fellowships led by Orsola De Marco and Dan Zucker which has led to recruitment of Lee Spitler. Hoping this appointment can be made permanent. Dr Spitler will also apply to the scheme that replaces the Future Fellowship Scheme. Not sure what will happen until after the next election. Encouraging him also to apply for a DECRA.

### **DECRA**

- Across MQ this year 33 DECRA's submitted and we got 3.
- Across Astronomy in Australia only 3 or 4 were awarded. Another round in Feb March next year.
- David Frew put in a DECRA and was in the top 10% and will submit again this year with better metrics. He will be up against Lee Spitler and Daniela Carollo who are internal MQ so there is a strong chance of getting one.

### **ERA**

How many other areas at MQ got a 5? Within Department of Physics and Astronomy:

- Physics & Astronomy as a Department 5
- Quantum 5
- Astronomy 5
- MQ Photonics optical physics 4
- Solid State Material Physics 3
- Earth and Planetary Sciences 5

Faculty of Science got the most fives

Do the VC and DVCR's priorities align with the ERA results with all the changes?

- some of the areas where the university has been concentrating has gone backwards in the ERA rankings and the university is concentrating on the Hospital.
- The new Dean has a medical physics background and the new VC has a medical background.
- Wait and see who is appointed DVCR next year when Jim Piper leaves.
- The new Dean is evidence based. He came up with H indices for everyone in the faculty. There are 500 research active staff in the faculty including academics and postdocs.
- Showed the first hundred with staff numbers at the recent town hall meeting. 2 MQ AAstro academics in the top 6 across the entire faculty, Dan Zucker and Quentin.
- Clive has been Dean for 3 months.

MQ AAstro doing well with

- grants
- access to telescopes
- HDR students
- Publications
- New appointments
- Completions
- Media coverage
- Prizes and awards

**Space to Grow**- using astronomy to engage students in physics and maths

- Disappointment with Space to Grow phase two linkage didn't get up
- Brian Schmidt public patron-
- One teacher put in for teacher of the year NSW nomination

- Student selected as highly commended Sleek Geeks on ABC
- 3 research papers in refereed astronomical literature with school students and their teachers as co authors
- Grant got in the top 10% last time but that was before latest metrics were known.
- Put in new ARC Linkage Industry grant application 4 December. Existing partners still contributing but university didn't match funds because it didn't fit within the industrial linkage seed money scheme.
  - o **Post meeting:** this has now changed and MQ has now awarded a \$23K safety net to match current partner contributions
- Project manager has gone from 1 FTE to .6 FTE until June.
  - o This will revert to close to full time due to new funds
- Looking for other funding avenues- spoke to Simon Nasht (works with Dick Smith) and getting onto Catalyst next year. Also looking at Ian Potter foundations, entrepreneurs and companies to keep the project alive.
- Good Centre activity as S2G it covers all areas of the centre.

## RIBG

- Our latest bid was unsuccessful and so this item failed against this KPI
- RIBG normally used to buy something for a lab but astronomers don't need equipment usually as professional telescopes are off campus
- We used to use ANSTO AMRFP funding which has now been stopped
- Need a computer server for the PNe database which will be a legacy resource for the entire community. Database will be cohosted by the CDS in Strasbourg
- Multiple unsuccessful attempts for \$50-60K as the committee is unfamiliar with the needs of astronomers
- We do get many LIEF grants
- We need observing support money, money for a server and to help with major data reduction and software issues
- Could get post docs or PhD students employed at a fraction FTE for support
- Recommend to look at outcomes from process for a pattern, there is a current emphasis on gadgets and not everyday equipment.
- Previously got an RIBG for a research assistant on the proviso that it not be requested again so it was a short-term solution to a long-term problem.
- Mike Ireland got an infrared camera last year joint with MQ photonics.
- IT is now being centralized so that is not an option either
- **Request that advisory board endorse disappointment at the lack of our RIBG funding- and suggest scheme be adapted to cater for growing astronomy cohort within FoS**
- **Action Item: QAP to send previous RIBG bid to BF for feedback as to how it could be improved**

- ❖ **Recommendation: To recast in terms of the high technology equipment needed and then someone to drive it rather in software support in relation to a specific project. Could maybe align to a Swinburne style super computer that can be used for modeling etc...**

### **HDR students**

- usually between 3-3.5 years to complete, others a bit longer
- no fails or dropouts so far
- A couple of PhDs were converted to Masters for personnel (non academic) reasons.

### **HDR Student recruitment**

- is an issue as astronomy has grown over the last ten years across Australia and the domestic talent pool hasn't grown as fast so there is more competition between Universities for small numbers of students.
- mostly overseas students 2/3 foreign to 1/3 domestic
- domestic students not very mobile
- MQ co-tutelle is strong program here with \$26M invested
- Current crops of 4 honours students who all got 1<sup>st</sup> class honours have applied to do PhDs at MQ and only one or two will get a scholarship. To get an MQ scholarship as well as the entry qualification a student needs a prize or publication. Some students are working on publications and will try again mid year
- APA scholarships awarded on merit not pro rata per size of department

### **Budget**

- HoD- has put to the Dean that each research centre should get 75K per year from next year (likely to be only \$15K in practice)
- Maybe implement an ARC grant tax like a .2 FTE post as centre support
- Alternative is to shorten length of post doc and use the savings for admin support
- Planet units bring a lot of money into the department.
- Our undergrad numbers are stable and our HDR students are growing.
- Looking at using argument of our RQF income to support MQAAstro

### **Specific Centre Activities**

- MQ AAAStro Annual Workshop; TAI PAN workshop held in early December 2012
- TAI PAN will be a technology demonstrator for Manifest on the GMT for Schmidt telescope
- AAO joint-position agreements also starting with CSIRO Astronomy and Space Science (CASS)



- Newsletter due out early in the new year (once every two months or so)
- Afternoon teas- numbers 15-30 people for collegial activity that follows seminar program.
- Seminar Program- Daniela Carollo organized this year. We had 10 external speakers this year. It's a mixture of our own people including students to eminent visitors.

### **Joint Opportunities**

- Joint AAO appointments are all renewable with the risk on the university to take on the person if the AAO doesn't renew.
- Discussion of possibilities joint speakers with the AAO. More difficult now after the AAO move.
- AAO moved to Delhi Road near new NMI labs- opportunity to do things jointly but increased distance makes it more difficult
- Now we are in closer proximity to CASS than to AAO
- Now difficult to do a joint Colloquia with AAO and CASS due to distance

*WC- leaves the meeting at 3pm*

### **KPIs**

#### **Already discussed in previous item**

Bring in a lot of money in ARC grants, papers and completions and all the joint appointments. They save not only a half appointment but counts as non ARC research income which means that HERDC cuts in and we eventually get paid back 52 cents of every dollar we get from the AAO which means extra Government money to MQ in a year or two. Long term QAP, for example as a joint MQ/AAO appointment costs the university 25% of a level E.

- ❖ **Recommendation: Include grant success in KPIs and base off applications not success rates. Use the word competitive. Make sure it's achievable.**

### **Centre Plans**

- QAP will carry on as Centre Director carrying on KPIs and ensure that we don't go backwards to an ERA of 4
- Consolidation; fresh students to replace graduating ones
- Lee Spitler has been appointed to look after HDR recruitment (initially mentored by QAP)
- Potential additional AAO /CASS joint positions
- Go strategically for Radio Astronomy SKA
- Mid term review entrance as associate for CAASTRO- There are rumours of a buy in requirements (e.g. for Univ. Queensland).

- ❖ **Recommendation: Pitch research as part of CAASTRO themes not astronomy type; dynamic, dark or evolving universe.**

### **3. Miscellaneous items**

- Discussion of the role of Centre Director in relation to the department and the desire for more responsibility to be shared within the department
- QAP to send on a copy of the external review to the board for response in relation to the centre
- Nodes of Centres of Excellence at MQ within the Department; CUDOs and QSci Tech and EQUIS
- Positions in the Faculty; HoD, Head of Teaching and Learning, HDR Research, Chair of Research Committee. There are 4 Centres in the Department, which is unique.
- Centre Directors are not currently considered part of the leadership team within the Department.
- QAP is doing extraordinarily well with the structure you're working in

- ❖ **Recommendation: ensure that the joint MQ/CASS position goes ahead**

QAP requests that the advisory board gives a report that he can show to the Dean in regards to the issues discussed (especially budget) and success of the centre with recommendations for going forward.

The board agreed to do this.

- ❖ **Recommendation: Next meeting in 6 Months**