

# STUC Feedback from October 2024 Telecon

The STUC met on zoom on October 7, 2024. We discussed some of the key questions on which STScI asked for feedback.

The STUC has received a lot of input from other members of the community in recent weeks, and there is significant concern about the budget situation and the implications for Cycle 33 and beyond. The community expressed a sense of frustration with how fast the decisions are being made and the lack of time for extended community input.

The STUC had a lively discussion of the situation, and it's clear that the situation is frustrating for everyone involved. The STUC is grateful for the frequent updates from STScI, but finds it difficult to offer specific recommendations without more information, though we understand that it may not be possible to share budget details. We especially appreciate the effort from STScI to protect the science output of Hubble. We recognize that the situation appears to be somewhat improved from the worst case scenario presented at the June meeting. In this response, we describe our feedback on each of the questions:

- 1. Does the STUC endorse stopping operations of ACS/WFC and WFC3/IR in order to protect the unique UVO capabilities of Hubble and maintain an equitable approach for community access to well-calibrated, science-ready data?**
  - o Full support for unique modes rather than partial support for all**

The STUC is not comfortable endorsing the plan to stop operations of these modes, especially the unique visible-light capabilities of ACS/WFC. *We strongly recommend pursuing shared risk for all modes, similar to Cycle 33, as long as the budget allows.* The STUC is particularly concerned about the danger of not being able to recover lost modes if the budget situation improves, or another instrument fails, in the future. Given how quickly things have changed so far, there was a feeling that keeping options open for the future is crucial.

The STUC agrees that preserving the unique UVO capabilities of Hubble is an important priority to serve as a bridge to HWO.

As stated above, we have received a lot of feedback that the community is frustrated by the speed of the process and the lack of opportunity to provide input. The STUC urges STScI to find more venues in which to allow the community to offer suggestions and feedback. The more transparency about the trade-offs involved the better. Being scientists in a quantitative field, some community members feel that they need to see the numbers in order to be convinced. The STUC recognizes that the budget situation is being driven by actions outside of STScI's control, and we appreciate STScI's effort to keep the community informed and we encourage STScI to continue providing information available as soon as it's practical to do so.

The Town Hall next week is an excellent start. We suggest that STScI try to invite feedback on all of the issues discussed recently, including operating instrument modes, grant funding, and the Fellowships. It would also be very helpful to seek community input on the priorities for the later years of the budget, when the cuts are more drastic. Allowing the broad range of Hubble users to feel that they are part of the process will help ensure that the community remains as enthusiastic as it has always been.

## **2. Feedback on the Prioritized Mission Objectives**

The STUC is impressed with the PMOs as written. We feel they do an excellent job of describing the priorities and providing a road map for the specific items that will be needed in the Senior Review proposal. We especially appreciate that the PMOs call out the unique visible-light capabilities in addition to UV. Our only suggestion would be to ensure that the PMOs are consistent with the goal of maintaining operations of all modes and fully supporting unique modes, as long as possible within the budget.

## **3. Does the STUC have a comment on how the Hubble-Einstein-Sagan Fellowships should be handled?**

The STUC feels that it would make more sense for NASA to handle the Fellowships outside of the Hubble budget, given their reach beyond Hubble-specific research. If NASA is considering changes to the program, we recommend gathering broad community input (especially outside of UVO science) before making any decisions.