

2013 GEM Workshop “Sun-Earth Connections” Community Town Hall Meeting Minutes

Background:

Agency presentations made during morning plenary on 19 June 2013 at NSF 2013 GEM Workshop

- NSF (/GEM)– Ray Walker – upbeat, positive and forward looking report – strong strategic plan in geospace but challenges in implementation owing to uncertainty of near- and long-term budgets
- NOAA – Howard Singer –positive prospects buoyed by renewed national interest and priority in Space Weather monitoring and prediction; opportunity exists to capitalize on high visibility and increasing customer growth and need for space weather prediction products
- NASA – David Sibeck (for Mona Kessel) – dramatic heliophysics budget cuts and commensurate inability to make progress on even most conservative version of recently completed Decadal Survey

Initial Community Reaction:

- Brisk and passionate discussion about challenges, threats, and opportunities for community
- Decision to hold an impromptu lunch meeting with interested members of GEM community to discuss consciousness on these issues and to develop an action plan that includes tactical and strategic components
- Call to action!

Notes from Lunchtime Community Meeting (70 - 100 participants):

General comments:

- Resolve to not let budget cuts go unanswered - plans for broad engagement with space physics community to promote our science and our importance within each agency and to national decision makers
- Clearly a range of issues to be addressed, some agency specific, multilayered and requiring messaging from range of stakeholders, students to senior members, to a wide variety of audiences (program directors, agency leaders, Congress, OMB, public, other national policy makers, and people and organizations of influence and interest)
- Importance for community to remain cohesive and with a coherent strong and swift message to these multilayered, connected audiences
- Articulated need for coordinating body that can help with developing and delivering messages

Agency-specific comments:

NSF

- Need to demonstrate value of NSF programs
 - Letter writing advocacy for GEM – especially from students to Ray Walker – work through GEM student organization – develop speaking points for letter writers in order for them to best demonstrate the value of GEM to their collective voice. Extend this also to equivalent CEDAR and SHINE groups to develop community-wide voice for Sun-Earth Connections science theme

- Letter writing advocacy for NSF – especially from senior members of community to Senior Leadership at NSF (e.g., Roger Wakimoto, and Cora Marrett, with copies to Michael Morgan and relevant program directors in GEO Directorate)
 - Speaking points to be developed, but should include such things as: advocacy for core program, consolidating all of solar science at NSF into the geosciences, applauding forward-looking strategic plan that is responsive to Decadal Survey, development of SEC midscale program, etc.
 - GEM (CEDAR/SHINE) is embraced and highly valued by international community; seek also that community for external advocacy (highly leveraged)

NASA

- “This is the cut, this is the cut, this is the cut...”; Leadership at the Agency should hear our loud and swift response to these dramatic cuts to Heliophysics that will cripple the program in the near-term and devastate it in the long-term
- We need to voice strongly to NASA HQ leadership the value of our science to the Agency and the Nation and what will be lost. Like other disciplines routinely do in the past, we should exert the same level of push back from our community, responding coherently and cohesively as a collective with a loud and firm voice.
- Send letters to Charlie Bolden – speaking points to be drawn heavily from recent Decadal Survey, and will include the programs at risk: DRIVE, Cubesats/LCAS, GSRP/STEM programs, acceleration of the Explorer program – small group to provide speaking points (including Mag/Solar/Helio/ITM) – with copies of letters to John Grunsfeld (SMD AA) and to our new incoming Division Director of Heliophysics (anticipated to be announced soon, Vicki Elsbernd is currently acting Director)
- E-mail versus letters – Both are fine – use email if it is easier, probably as effective

NOAA

- Reinforce that we are a community that does not just give our science to the Nation.
- We are a community that has become increasingly aware and able to listen to operational needs and respond to them with scientific progress and operational capabilities. In the parlance of the Decadal Survey, we are conversant in and embrace the concept of O2R-R2O.
- (This underscores the critical values of NOAA, NSF, and NASA to the overall space weather program.)
- There is a societal need for space weather information. NOAA is working, and had major successes, to transitioning observations and models to support these needs.
- The nation and community benefits by the partnerships among agencies, scientists, the commercial sector, etc.

Inter-Agency Issues

- Need to do much better to promote coordination and partnerships across agencies
- For example, the President’s office now looks to NOAA for space weather but does office know that both NASA and NSF are also making critical contributions to Space Weather? Speak across

agencies with one voice and articulate that all agency contributions are important whether it is in role of prediction or in role of developing basic and applied scientific understanding.

- Leverage space weather value to society (“Black Swan” events?, how far can we push, too far? Appeal to the hazard/risk aspects that policymakers are used to, and those which are firmly based on facts, rather than appeal to scare tactics or hype. Reference NAS, Decadal, and similar reports)
- Continue instilling notion that space is highly strategic to the Nation, and thus worthy of a robust national investment of the sort described in the Decadal Survey but now not implementable in that form because of upcoming dramatic agency budget cuts

Form a Community Advocacy Group

- Articulated need to have a formal, official organization to coordinate Sun-Earth Connections community advocacy efforts (AGU/SPA? Change.org? “Heliophysics Society”? Space weather Society? People seemed to like best: Sun-Earth Connections Coalition or Society)?
- Recent examples of such community groups– Ocean Coalition and Weather Coalition – have proven successful and have been enormously important for sister disciplines who have had such advocacy groups for a long time (i.e, the Planetary Society). We need one, too.
- Tap into the many Institutional Federal Relations offices to help develop this coalition
- Task a subset of community to formulate such a coalition, with that group to:
 - Develop effective talking points for community to NASA, NSF, NOAA, and Congress and to also meet with agency leadership directly
 - Engage with other influential bodies/people to further promote value of SEC community (e.g., SSB, White House science and technology, etc.)
 - Speaking points should not deprecate Earth Science, Astronomy, or Planetary – rather they should continue to demonstrate to all audiences our value and importance
- Need to raise the appreciation and value of our science to the same level of NASA flagship missions such as JWST; the return on investment of our projects is enormous and with tremendous practical application
- Important to retain coherent focus on a small number of things to advocate rather than a long laundry list of conflicting priorities; avoid the message getting too diffuse, recommend sticking to the top three items from the Decadal Survey:
 - Complete ongoing programs
 - Implement DRIVE
 - Infuse funding into smaller programs, such as the NASA Explorer program, that are known to have especially great return on investment
- Keep the public better informed – tap into social media to get public advocacy that already exists in a diffuse way and thus multiply our voice and reach dramatically
- Improve how audiences (from public to Congress) recognize our research visually
 - Consider imaging the Earth for Geospace science (in the same way the Sun is used for solar physics, Hubble images for astrophysics, Saturn for Cassini/planetary, etc.)
 - Auroral imaging is one of the few tangible examples of what we do and it should be better exploited to our community’s benefit, play to our strengths, but don’t stretch

Completed ACTIONS:

- ✓ Disseminate minutes of meeting to GEM community (HSpence) – By 6/21/2013
- ✓ Develop multi-layered speaking points for letter writers and guidelines for disseminating letters to various audiences (HSpence/DBaker/Others) – By 6/21/2013
- ✓ Disseminate speaking points to GEM community/ mailing list (HSpence) – By 6/21/2013

Open ACTIONS:

- Communicate what we are doing to and for coordination with the CEDAR community (Larry Lyons liaison, Tom Immel, and through CEDAR mailing list) and to SHINE community (Nicky Fox, SP+ Project Scientist and SHINE mailing list) - Week of 6/24/2013
- Write letters and/or make visits to key people (everyone in community) – Starting next week through end of June
 - HSpence scheduled to meet Senator Shaheen (on CJS Appropriations Subcommittee) in DC on 6/25
- Form small grass-roots group as seed of advocacy group; tasked with developing plan forward toward implementation of “Sun-Earth Connections Coalition (SECC)”, an advocacy group akin to the Planetary Society (DBaker/LFisk/HSpence/Others TBD) – Underway