Women in the IAU

Ewine F. van Dishoeck
IAU President
What is the IAU?

- Worldwide union of all professional astronomers
- Promote and safeguard astronomy in all its aspects (including research, communication, education, and development) through international cooperation
- Founded in 1919
- 13500+ members from 82 countries
  - 18% women
- Scientific organization in Divisions, Commissions and Working Groups
Some increase in recent years, but fraction still disappointingly low
IAU gender-geographical distribution
(Adhering countries)

Wide range: from 7-8% Colombia/Japan ... to the 35-40% Bulgaria/Thailand/Argentina

From 3 to more than 2000 IAU members per country!
Largest contributors: **USA** (22%), **F/I/D/UK/JP** (5.5-7%)
Statistics per country per age bin 2015

Active Members from Countries with 400+ Members

- In black above each graph: number of members per country
- In white within graph: number of women per country in a given age-range

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%  
- 2015
- 2018
Some history

History of the IAU
The Birth and First Half-Century of the International Astronomical Union

Adriaan Blaauw

International Astronomical Union
Kluwer Academic Publishers
Executive Committee:

All men!
(very famous)

A few women present
IAU (assistant) General Secretary

Nel Splinter: first Assistant Secretary (Miss IAU)
Executive Committee

First female vice president: Wilhelmina Iwanowska 1973-1979

General Assembly Moscow 1958

Polish stellar astronomer
Actions to promote women

- More women in high IAU positions
Female IAU Presidents

Catherine Cesarsky  
2006-2009

Silvia Torres-Peimbert  
2015-2018

Ewine van Dishoeck  
2018-2021
IAU officers 2015-2018

President: Silvia Torres-Peimbert
President-elect: EvD
GS: Piero Benvenuti
AGS: Teresa Lago
Officers 2018-2021

President: EvD
President-elect: Debra Elmegreen
GS: Teresa Lago
AGS: Ian Robson
IAU Executive Committee

Mexico City May 2016

3/6 Vice Presidents
~35% Division Presidents
Gender equality in scientific meetings

% Female

Participants
Invited
Contributed
Actions to promote women

- More women in high IAU positions
- Activities
  - Women in astronomy lunches
  - Mentoring
  - Schools
  - ....
- Junior members: as of GA 2018
Women in astronomy lunches
International Schools for Young Astronomers

JEDI Namibie

West Africa
TGF fellowship

2019 proposal deadline March 31!

k$50 research funding
PhD prize each year in each Division

- Prize for best PhD thesis in each Division
- Next deadline: December 15, 2019
Summary

- Fraction of women in IAU still low
- Fraction of women in high positions IAU is now high
- Actions to attract more women and making them more visible
  - Suggestions welcome!
- Women can grow within IAU to leadership positions
  - WG, Commission, Division Steering committees
  - Organizing IAU Symposia
- Actions to increase diversity
My supervisor’s advice
Alexander Dalgarno by Neal Lane

- **Motivation matters**: choose the right problems
- **Confidence matters**: assume nothing is impossible
- **Skills matter**: use all the tools
- **Patience and tenacity matter**: never give up
- **People matter**: human relationships are special
- **Integrity matters**: honesty and high standards
International Astronomical Union
1919 - 2019

www.iau-100.org  #IAU100

We are all world citizens under the same beautiful sky
Main lessons/advice

- Make sure you excel in one area
  - Better to do one topic very well than lots topics average
  - Often involves hard work
- Be passionate about your science
- Take the steepest trajectory early in your career
  - Seize opportunities
- Balance opportunities with your partner
  - Including work-life balance, household activities
- Have fun in your work, enjoy life!