

LCLS UEC Meeting Minutes: 2021-10-22

Present: E. Biasin, Y. Cao, L. Conradson, G. Doumy, M. Dunne, N. Hartley, J. Kern, C. Knotts, A. Marinelli, E. McBride, M. Mitrano, D. Oberthür, B. Ofori-Okai, C. Rajendran, D. Rolles, R. Sension, P. Sun, M. Trigo, G. J. Williams, G. George.

Absent: T. Gorkhover, M. Khalil.

Guests: P. Jones, B. Lemesh.

Introduction of new UEC members (Elisa Biasin, UEC Chair)

Director's Update (Mike Dunne, LCLS Director):

- Recalling major advisory bodies of the facility: Scientific Advisory Committee, User Executive Committee, Proposal Review Panel.
- Review of the UEC charter. The UEC is a channel of communication between user community and LCLS management and information flow should be bidirectional.
- Review of focus areas for the LCLS operation at the user level and strategic plans of the facility. We need to engage a wider user community through the User Meeting and additional workshops.
- Meetings with the LCLS director occur typically on a monthly basis.
- The user community is changing. Currently about 2000 unique users from 37 US states and 23 other countries. LCLS II will prompt significant changes of the user population.
- Integration with the SSRL UEC will be crucial to expand the user base.
- Multiple major upgrade projects in parallel (>\$2B investment)
- 2020-2022 is a period of intense transition, more than 25% of staff appeared in the past 12 months. LCLS staff currently counts about 210 people (beamline scientists, engineering, control, lasers, data management, technical support, etc)
- New modes of access to the facility (Rapid Access, Scientific Campaigns)
- New enabling capabilities: XUV beamlines, optics/laser labs, biolabs, new workflows.
- Detailed feedback is now more important than ever, as major transitions are underway.

General Discussion

Question: Is there a way to extract a user mailing list to enhance the communications between the UEC and the user base?

- This is an interesting suggestion and should be explored. The UEC can reach out to user community and widen the user base in many ways. It is crucial to attract collaborators and advertise the capabilities of this facility at general gatherings, such as DOE contractor meeting, where UEC representatives act in their capacity of scientists.
- The LCLS could indeed provide channels for the UEC to directly connect with the user community.
- A new, more direct way to communicate with the user community besides the user survey at the User Meeting would be beneficial. One suggestion would be to organize meetings hosted by the UEC in addition to the LCLS Run town halls.
- A mailing list would be a good idea to improve real-time communication.
- One could also embed UEC-related news in LCLS-related news & highlights.
- A possible avenue to expand the outreach could be represented by social media. There has been an effective use of a Twitter bot for the cryoEM community, which could serve as a model.

Comment by the Director: There will be an upcoming in-depth discussion about staff retention, as discussed in a recent letter by the UEC.

Comment: This is the first meeting of the new UEC. One of the first tasks for this new UEC is the election of the vice-Chair, who substitutes the chair in meetings and is involved in organizing the annual User meeting. Nominations are currently being accepted and a vote will follow after Nov. 1st.

Comment: We now discuss the outcomes of the 2021 User Meeting. There were 1200 registrations and 800 actual attendees (62% attendance rate). Mornings showed larger attendance (300-400 attendees), probably due to the participation of the European audience. About 200 people connected in afternoons. By Friday data showed there was a drop in the number of attendees. Concerning the poster session, which this year was hosted on Gather Town, there has been an improvement with respect to the 2020 User meeting. There were 71 posters, and about 20-40 people per session during the lunch break (Pacific Time). It might have helped the fact that this year the meeting was structured over one week to avoid Zoom fatigue. The next question is how to improve further.

- While the workshop was overall positive, some people missed a few sessions. What is the policy about recording during the workshop? It seems that a few workshops were recorded.
 - There was no official recording policy for LCLS and SSRL workshops – it was up to each workshop organizer to decide. Recordings might be an option for next year in a hybrid meeting, with agreement from the speakers.
- Do we have data from Gather to know the exact number of people in the poster session? Can we compare the attendance of the 2020 and 2021 User’s meeting? This would translate into a direct comparison between the one- and the two-week formats.
- While this was a great user meeting, how do we gauge success of the user meeting format? One possible metric could be the attendees’ engagement, e.g. by quantifying the exponential decay of attendees during the week. For the poster session, this is less straightforward.
- What defined attendance to a specific workshop? We count people who logged into the meeting, and they are counted even if they disconnect before the end of the session.
- Feedback from some of the workshops’ organizers is that workshops have been interesting, but the community was not too engaged (e.g., few questions were asked). Next year, in a hybrid format, this could be very different.
- The one-week format leads to very busy schedules but committing to two weeks is harder. In addition, the posters at lunchtime were difficult to follow.

Comment: It is important to define a list of topics for future meetings. Each member of the UEC should review the list of proposed topics and propose possible edits. The first topic is how to expand the user base and improve the user experience. The Chair will soon send out a template for a user climate survey questionnaire. The UEC will need to proof the survey before it is sent out to the entire user community.

Comment: Another important discussion topic which emerged over the last few weeks is the PRP process. It would be a good idea to invite current PRP members during the UEC meetings to discuss ways to improve the proposal review in the context of the LCLS II

Comment: Another important discussion concerns staff retention and burnout. An exciting new element is that Matthias Kling will start his position on Nov. 1st. Finally, we could discuss about the new labs becoming available in the Arrillaga Science Center.