

LCLS UEC Meeting Minutes: 2021-11-19

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

Absent: C. Rajendran, T. Gorkhover

Guests: P. Jones

Announcements:

Matteo Mitrano elected as the new vice-chair of UEC.

Urgent/important future points of discussion in UEC meetings (from UEC input in shared google doc):

Climate Survey Q: Will discuss today and hope to send it out before the winter break

Expansion of user base: topic in January meeting. Discussion in context of LCLS-II and LCLS-X.

Staff burn-out. Discuss with Mike, Sebastien Boutet and Matthias Kling in the December meeting.

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Updates from Mike Dunne:

Two main topics:

***Where are we with the experimental program**

***Staff burnout and retention (in connection to response to UEC letter)**

***Where are we with the experimental program**

- Results from run 20 are almost finalized; 25% acceptance rate.
- Some experiments that had been postponed from run 19 were scheduled in run 20.
- Run 20 from Jan 22 to Aug 22, fits well with LCLS-II schedule. Superconducting accelerator will be cooled down in parallel, turn on of LINAC in April to June. Early Aug 2-3 weeks of maintenance.
- LCLS-II FEL commissioning in Aug-Sep
- Six weeks shutdown after run 20. Run21 will start Sep/Oct 22
- Will be complex period, with ramping up of LCLS-II
- Call for run 21 as early as possible, most probably jan/feb 22, deadline mar 22

Questions:

Will there be another call for scientific campaigns?

Answer: no, we have already 8 campaigns, 10-15% of beamtime, so no new call at the moment. Good diversity of campaigns with regard to scientific areas.

When will the schedule be released for run 20?

Answer: was released yesterday (11/18/2021) for almost all the experiments, most likely will be on the web on Monday.

Do we have an estimate on how many standard configuration proposals were accepted?

Answer: about 50% of the experiments scheduled in run 20 are stand configs (43% of proposals asked for standard configs)

***Staff burnout and retention:**

- This is a time of substantial growth and new directions for the LCLS facility (with the transition to LCLS-II, many new systems/instruments, beamlines, DAQ, lasers, detectors, etc).
- Many new people that need to be integrated into facility. This is challenging and we have to be thoughtful in this transition period. Also COVID: a lot of remote users, impact on mode of work and impact on staff. Also home-office has an impact, response time etc. Have to be thoughtful about workload on staff.
- LCLS introduced a new policy some years ago to get things in operation for users faster. This means that new capabilities are available sooner but they are initially offered at risk, so that fully robust performance should not be expected. This places a responsibility on the user community to not drive unreasonable expectations that can place an even greater burden and stress on the facility and its staff. Instruments like TMO went from commissioning to a reasonable level of user operations very fast, which is remarkable.

Address the major change LCLS is going through:

- Comparing where we were in 2017 to today, there has been a lot of growth in the beamline scientist division (SRD), with roughly 2x growth in the number of staff.
- Restructuring of SRD into scientific areas, now led by Matthias Kling. Complemented by Sebastien Boutet's Experiment Operations Division that is structured around the instruments. Together, this allows scientists to grow their skills in scientific leadership, facility development, and user operations. The intent is to provide a broader set of opportunities for staff career development – to help with retention, engagement, and personal satisfaction. Interested in feedback from UEC.
- Leaders in the different scientific departments have been appointed within SRD:
 - AMO Science: James Cryan
 - Bioscience: Mark Hunter
 - Chemical Sciences: Thomas Wolf
 - Laser Science: Joe Robinson
 - Material Sciences: Apurva Mehta
 - Matter in Extreme Conditions: Gilliss Dyer.
- Both for run 19 and 20 action was taken to reduce COVID induced workload on staff. This included raising the level of awareness on stress and mental health issues, reducing workload by re-scheduling and slower phasing in of new instruments. Added training camps for beamline scientists.
- Asking for UECs help in all of these aspects. Eg. supporting that not all slots are filled with experiments, that new instruments are coming into operation slower.
- During the recent hiring (of ~60 new staff at LCLS), we took a deliberate approach to focus on early career candidates rather than experts, to get more diverse staff. Means more people to be hired, because more training is needed.

Questions/Remarks:

Great to get new people on board and to hear about the staff training.

Really nice plan. One thing, big increase in staff, is this sustainable in future?

Answer: Yes – the intent is to build to a steady state of staff that will persist from 2022 until 2027 (when LCLS-II-HE comes online). This has driven a 70% increase in personnel costs from LCLS-I operations to the LCLS-II era. This is balanced by a reduced budget for development projects, new endstations, detectors etc. Was a decision taken with DOE, and offset by newly allocated additional funds from the LCLS-II budget, along with the inclusion of the LCLS-II-HE instruments within the capital project, and the scope of the MEC-Upgrade project.

Wondering if there is some amount of effort to improve documentation, to make it easier for new people and users.

Answer: yes we have this in mind and are working on this. Hired a librarian to organize this. New chief-engineer to also improve documentation.

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Discussion on User Survey:

Incentive for people to take survey? Amazon gift card?

Comments: Question at the end about background. Ethnicity list feels very American? Might lose information if not able to differentiate between eg Indians and Japanese.

Should we put the racial/ethnicity question in there at all, feels strange for Europeans?

We need ethnicity data to look into discrimination correlated to racial/ethnic issues. The philosophy is to be more informative than a normal list. There are also legally protected ethnicities.

Do we have to put in questions about "veterans" etc?

No, not really, since survey is not from DOE but from UEC. Will ask back regarding that.

Comments: Wondering if survey is trying to do too much? Diversity and user support can be related but can make things too long. Split user experience feedback from climate? otherwise maybe too long for younger people?

Maybe hint at the beginning and give people a choice?

Turn it the other way around? climate first, experience afterwards?

Drop-down menu with possibility to skip/select only certain sections?

It is deliberate choice to be able to correlate demographics with user experience. It was already discussed that it is important to ask students and postdocs (that usually don't fill in end of run questionnaire) about user experience. Balance between information needed and length. Paul/Elisa will look into points raised.