To the committee:

The Observatory Committee met today for an hour and a half to discuss the observatory director applicants. No consensus developed regarding a leading candidate, and no hiring recommendation came out of this meeting. So we will need to meet again. Please review the possible meeting days and times listed at the end of this message and indicate which times you are available.

For the benefit of those in attendance (and those who were not), I summarize some aspects of our discussion below:

(1) All three interviewed applicants likely could do the job - The committee believes that each of the three we interviewed has important strengths and has reasonable prospects for being successful at the position. Gaskell, clearly, has the most experience. But Sykes and Knauer gave indications that they could grow into the job and gain the needed expertise to fulfill the wide-ranging job duties.

(2) All three interviewed applicants have weaknesses - Gaskell does not seem to be especially interested in developing ties with (and programs for) K12 teachers. Also, as a very senior individual (and by apparent personality type) he may be reluctant to take directions from the department on observatory management and priorities. He is not viewed as an especially good listener. Sykes is viewed, perhaps, as less driven than the others and more reticent. He might need more supervision and more prodding to accomplish all desired observatory director responsibilities. Knauer is filled with enthusiasm and has many ideas. However, he has no experience managing an observatory, and he may not be inclined like leadership in developing all aspects of the observatory. He may need more direction, such as a faculty supplied "to do" list.

(3) If we offer the job to any applicant, we should plan in advance to deal with the applicant’s weaknesses - Who in the department, for example, would work with Gaskell to implement K12 teacher initiatives? Who would see that Sykes stays on task and fulfills all responsibilities? Who would create Knauer's "to do" list?

(4) Should we re-advertise the job? - Since none of the applicants we interviewed (nor any that we did not) appears to meet all of our criteria, should we re-advertise the job? The committee noted that the UK Human Resources website (and our job description) may have dissuaded some applicants, especially Ph.D. level applicants, from applying. If we did re-advertise the job, we might (or might not) get a better pool of applicants. However, we would also very likely lose the existing applicants to other positions, and we would delay hiring an observatory director for many months.

Obviously, we need to meet again to consider all of these issues, especially items (3) and (4). Please let me know which time slots listed below are available for you NEXT WEEK. And please think about the issues discussed above in advance of our next meeting.

Tom

POSSIBLE MEETING DAYS AND TIMES (week of October 22):

"y" means available, "?" means available with some difficulty

Monday 3:00p
Monday 4:00p
Monday 5:00p

Tuesday 1:00p