



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dr. Francesca Primas, Full Astronomer, Observing Programmes Office, Directorate for Science European Southern Observatory to receive the inaugural 2023 Nancy Grace Roman Award from the Astronomical Society of the Pacific

San Francisco, California – September 25, 2023 - Named for an icon in the history of astronomy research and space exploration, ASP's Nancy Grace Roman Award was introduced this year to recognize an individual or group for significant contributions to promoting gender equity and inclusion in astronomy and related fields. The award celebrates the achievements of individuals, groups, or organizations working to encourage participation in astronomy and related fields by people traditionally or currently excluded from these fields because of their gender, including girls, women, and transgender, non-binary, and gender-nonconforming people.

The inaugural recipient of the **Nancy Grace Roman Award** is **Dr. Francesca Primas**, Full Astronomer at the European Southern Observatory (ESO). Dr. Primas is a renowned observational astrophysicist studying the formation and evolution of the Milky Way and its satellite galaxies via their chemical histories. The Nancy Grace Roman Award recognizes her extensive commitment and contributions to the promotion of women in astronomy and against gender biases in science.

Dr. Primas began her work in gender equity 15 years ago, publishing a study on the status of women at the ESO. This work sparked important discussions and led to the creation of diversity and inclusion initiatives at ESO in which she continues to be actively engaged. *“Francesca has always been a very vocal supporter of women in astronomy and, more in general, in science,”* praises a Full Astronomer colleague.

Primas went on to serve as an advisor and then chair of International Astronomical Union's (IAU) Working Group on Women in Astronomy. To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the IAU, Francesca spearheaded the AstroVoices project. Through the creation of short video clips, this initiative gave over 600 women from 60 different countries an opportunity to share their passion for astronomy with the goal of encouraging young girls to follow their path.

Dr. Primas has organized and participated in numerous task forces, forums, panels, and presentations focused on the status of women in astronomy and strategies for creating safe and encouraging work environments. She has also been an active member of the American Astronomical Society Committee on the Status of Women in Astronomy.

Join us in celebration of Dr. Francesca Primas' achievements at the in-person ASP Awards Gala on Saturday, November 11, 2023 at the Grand Bay Hotel San Francisco in Redwood City, California.



About Nancy Grace Roman

Nancy Grace Roman was an icon in the history of astronomy research and space exploration. She was often called “mother” of the Hubble Space Telescope for her work in spearheading its development. Roman was also a vocal advocate for encouraging girls to participate in STEM as well as a generous supporter and benefactor of the ASP.

Roman earned her doctorate in astronomy from the University of Chicago in 1949. Ten years later, Nancy Grace Roman became the first woman to hold an executive position at NASA, overseeing a new “program for space astronomy.” NASA itself was a new government agency, and in her position Dr. Roman toured the country to talk to the nation’s research astronomers, find out what they wanted to study, and then convince them to consider the many advantages of collecting their data from space. In the years that followed, Dr. Roman planned many of the highly successful programs and experiments for NASA’s space missions, including Spacelab, Gemini, Apollo, and Skylab. In 1979, NASA felt ready to develop a program to launch a large and versatile space-based telescope. Dr. Roman was hired by the agency to plan and campaign for this new generation of telescope, helping NASA pitch the project to a variety of skeptical government agencies, including Congress. Dr. Roman’s passionate advocacy is credited for the launch of the Hubble Space Telescope in 1990, the instrument that for decades has provided the research community with images and data that has fundamentally transformed humanity’s understanding of the cosmos.

About the ASP

The Astronomical Society of the Pacific (ASP), established in 1889, is a 501c3 nonprofit organization whose mission is to use astronomy to increase the understanding and appreciation of science and to advance science and science literacy. The ASP connects scientists, educators, amateur astronomers and the public together to learn about astronomical research, improve astronomy education, and share resources that engage learners of all kinds in the excitement and adventure of scientific discovery. Current ASP programs and initiatives support college faculty, K-12 science teachers, amateur astronomy clubs, science museums, libraries, park rangers, and girl scouts to name a few.

Through its annual awards, ASP recognizes achievement in research, technology, education, and public outreach. The awards include the ASP’s highest honor, the Catherine Wolfe Bruce Gold Medal awarded since 1898 for a lifetime of outstanding research in astronomy. The Bruce Medal has gone to some of the greatest astronomers of the past century, including Arthur Eddington, Edwin P. Hubble, Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar, and Vera Rubin. The ASP also presents the Klumpke-Roberts Award for outstanding contributions to the public understanding and appreciation of astronomy. Awardees include Carl Sagan, Isaac Asimov, and the Hubble Heritage Project.



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