



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Astronomical Society of the Pacific Announces 2026 Awards for Astronomy Research and Education

Daly City, California, September 3, 2026 – The Astronomical Society of the Pacific (ASP), one of the oldest, innovative, and respected organizations in the U.S. dedicated to increasing the understanding and teaching of astronomy, is honored to announce the recipients of its 2026 awards for excellence in astronomy research and education. Join us in celebration of these prestigious awards at the in-person ASP Awards Gala on November 6, 2026, at the Chabot Space and Science Center in Redwoods Regional Park, Oakland, CA.

Below, please find the full press releases for the winners of the ASP Awards presented in 2026:

- Klumpke-Roberts Award
- Catherine Wolfe Bruce Medal
- Arthur B.C. Walker II Award
- Las Cumbres Award
- Richard H. Emmons Award
- Maria and Eric Muhlmann Award
- Robert J. Trumpler Award

2026 Klumpke-Roberts Award

Dr. Alexei Filippenko to receive the 2026 Dorothea Klumpke-Roberts Award from the Astronomical Society of the Pacific.



Awarded to an individual or individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the public understanding and appreciation of astronomy, the **Klumpke-Roberts Award** for 2026 goes to **Dr. Alexei (Alex) Filippenko**, for his dedication in sharing science through more than 40 years of engaging students and the public with infectious enthusiasm, engaging talks and other presentations, astronomy video courses, and media appearances.

Dr. Filippenko's story begins after receiving his PhD in Astronomy from the California Institute of Technology in 1984 followed by a postdoctoral Miller Research Fellowship at the University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley) where he joined the faculty in 1986. One nominator shares how "scientists are wary of operating at the intersection of science and entertainment, but through my many conversations with Alex I know that he views public outreach as central to his mission as an educator." This passion and his commitment have been instrumental in how he has communicated to several tens of thousands of students at UC Berkeley. His "Introduction to General Astronomy" class became wildly popular in the 1990s, bringing in class sizes upwards of 700-800 students and one of the largest and most sought-after undergraduate electives. A fellow educator shared an example of his infectious demonstration with how "at his classes at UC Berkeley, for example, he jumps from the floor to chairs and desks as he catches colored balls students toss at him, illustrating the absorption of photons by electrons in different atomic energy levels." By the 2010s, students voted Filippenko as "Best Professor" on campus a record nine times, and in 2006 he was named the Carnegie/CASE National Professor of the Year among doctoral and research institutions.

Alongside his highly engaging astronomy class, Filippenko is also a research scientist focusing on supernovae (exploding stars), gamma-ray bursts, active galaxies, black holes, and the expansion of the Universe. At UC's Lick Observatory, his scientific

contributions centered primarily on robotic supernova hunting, observational stellar and extragalactic astronomy, and long-standing educational leadership; he is also an active user of the 10 m Keck telescopes in Hawai`i, the Hubble Space Telescope, and JWST. In 1998, Filippenko was the sole scientist on both teams for the Supernova Cosmology Project and the High-z Supernova Search Team that used distant supernovae to discover that the universe's expansion is accelerating, presumably due to dark energy. Named 1998's top scientific breakthrough by *Science* magazine, this discovery earned both team leaders the 2011 Nobel Prize in Physics, and all team members the 2006 Gruber Cosmology Prize and the 2015 Breakthrough Prize in Fundamental Physics. He has upwards of 1200 scientific publications, more than 2900 abstracts and telegrams, and an impressive >232,000 citations.

Dr. Filippenko's contributions to public outreach extend beyond the classroom. One of his nominators notes how "Alex is always steadfast in his view that no matter how the message is packaged, it's important to get scientific research out to the general public." While Filippenko has co-authored an award-winning college textbook with Jay Pasachoff (5 editions), he also has given over 1600 public lectures or other presentations. He produced an "Understanding the Universe" video course for The Great Courses with 96 half-hour lectures, as well as their video courses "Black Holes Explained" and "Skywatching." He has also been the scientific advisor and on-camera contributor for many programs on the History Channel, The Weather Channel, PBS, and Science Channel.

Dr. Filippenko's numerous awards are attributed to his scientific contributions and generous gift of sharing his knowledge with the public. He has received distinguished awards and fellowships from institutions such as UC Berkeley, Texas A&M University, UC Santa Barbara, and the California Institute of Technology. Most recently, he was one of only three recipients of the 2026 Gruber Cosmology Prize for his studies of supernovae. He has also received awards from or been an elected member to organizations such as the American Astronomical Society (AAS), Astronomical Society of the Pacific (ASP), American Association of Physics Teachers, Guggenheim Foundation, Canadian Astronomical Society, US National Academy of Sciences, and American Academy of Arts & Sciences. He has served on multiple boards, including President of the ASP, AAS Councilor, Chabot Space & Science Center, and the SF Bay Area's Wonderfest. One of his most notable actions was his grassroots fundraising and public pressure to save Lick Observatory back in 2013, when it was threatened with closing.

2026 Bruce Medal

Dr. Steve B. Howell to receive the 2026 Catherine Wolfe Bruce Gold Medal from the Astronomical Society of the Pacific.



Daly City, California - September 3, 2026 – The Astronomical Society of the Pacific's **Catherine Wolfe Bruce Gold Medal** was established by Catherine Wolfe Bruce, an American philanthropist and patroness of astronomy. The ASP presents the medal annually to a professional astronomer in recognition of a lifetime of outstanding achievement and contributions to astrophysics research. It was first awarded in 1898 to Simon Newcomb. Previous recipients of the Bruce Medal include Giovanni V. Schiaparelli (1902), Edwin Hubble (1938), Fred Hoyle (1970), Vera Rubin (2003), and more recently Marcia Rieke (2023) for her contributions to the James Webb Space Telescope.

The recipient of the **2026 Catherine Wolfe Bruce Gold Medal** is **Dr. Steve B. Howell**, senior research scientist at the NASA Ames Research Center in Mountain View, California. He currently leads the NASA high-resolution imaging program supporting exoplanet science related to the Kepler Space Telescope, the Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite, JWST, and the upcoming ESA Ariel Space Telescope mission and the NASA Habitable World Space Observatory (HWO).

Dr. Howell's distinguished career has advanced our understanding of our own Solar System, stellar astrophysics, exoplanet, distant galaxies and interacting binary stars. He has led scientific teams for multiple international space missions, and his work in instrumentation revolutionized digital imaging space and ground-based telescope imaging. He shares his passion for science and discovery through his community service in formal and informal STEM education.

Starting in the early 1980s following two Masters Degrees, one in Astronomy from Penn State University, and one in Physics from the University of Toledo, Howell went to Kitt Peak National Observatory as the Charged Couple Device (CCD) Instrumentation Lead. His research on the use of digital image sensors used in telescopes led to a series of published papers that created the fundamental techniques astronomers use today to process images and measure light from celestial objects using CCD's on ground-based telescopes. He then adapted these techniques at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center for space missions working on the Galileo Mission's CCD imaging calibration team.

While doing scientific research at the Planetary Science Institute, Howell obtained his PhD in 1995 from the University of Amsterdam defending Photometric Observations of Faint Cataclysmic Variables. He published a set of landmark papers to explain how two stars orbiting closely together, below a well-known "period gap" between 2-3 hours, contained a donor star that lost so much mass that its true mass was dramatically lower than standard astronomical models assumed for its size.

Howell's use of his pioneering techniques mid-career led him to his world leadership across studies in variable stars, interacting binaries, cataclysmic variables and exoplanets. As project scientist for NASA's groundbreaking Kepler and post-Kepler K2 missions Dr. Howell's pioneering techniques for obtaining precision time series photometry helped discover over 2600 exoplanets.

Howell led the team that designed and built identical speckle cameras for the Gemini North and Gemini South, twin 8.1-meter optical and infrared telescopes placed strategically in both the northern (Hawaii) and southern hemispheres (Chile). These two instruments, `Alopeke and Zorro, provide astronomers with combined access to the entire night sky. The goal of these cameras is to take thousands of very short exposure images, combine them mathematically using Fourier techniques, and obtain a resulting image free of the variation of atmospheric turbulence. This gives ground-based telescopes space-based image resolution. As a collaborator expressed, Howell's "combination of designing outstanding instrumentation for the community, and using it to do cutting-edge science, is an inspiration for all astronomers."

Dr. Howell's research papers are widely cited for his leadership in scientific accomplishments and pioneering techniques. One nominator notes specifically how Howell's "2014 *The K2 Mission: Characterization and Early Results* laid out the rationale and early results of the post-Kepler K2 Mission. When the mission adopted a new approach to pointing, after the Kepler spaceship was unable to point precisely to maintain its original, continuous survey of exoplanets in a fixed region of the sky, K2 allowed Kepler to continue observing stars in various fields of view."

A pioneer, a collaborator, and a global leader in research, Dr. Howell is equally praised and admired for his mentorship of hundreds of students and graduate students, and as

advisor for 14 post-doctoral scholars. He brings the science and wonder of exploration and the natural world through sound, music, cooking, chemistry, reading, and writing. As a colleague of over 30 years stated “He takes great pride in mentoring and teaching anyone of any age and of any background – from seasoned astronomers looking to learn new techniques to high school students just learning to explore their excitement for science.”

Dr. Howell has written over 1325 scientific publications, articles, technical books, and invited book chapters and received over 20 prestigious awards from leading space and scientific organizations such as NASA, NOAO and the Optical Society of America. His widely known “Handbook of CCD Astronomy” is used world-wide as the textbook for understanding and using CCD detectors in astronomy. His career leaves a lasting legacy across every facet of modern astronomy—from pioneering the use of CCDs and building next-generation ground and space instruments to advancing university research and inspiring the public through education and outreach.

The Bruce Medalists: Full Biographies

Historian of astronomy Joseph S. Tenn has provided a history of the medal, with biographies and links to further information regarding all Bruce Medalists. This information resides on the Sonoma State University website.

2026 Arthur B.C. Walker II Award

Dr. Dara J. Norman to receive the 2026 Arthur B.C. Walker II Award given for outstanding achievement in astronomy and commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion in STEM by an African American scientist.



Daly City, California - September 3, 2026 - The Arthur B.C. Walker Award honors an African American scientist whose research has substantially contributed to astronomy or related fields, and who has demonstrated a substantial commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion in STEM. The 2026 recipient of the Arthur B.C. Walker II Award is Dr. Dara J. Norman, Director of the Community Science & Data Center (CSDC) at the National Science Foundation's National Optical-Infrared Astronomy Research Laboratory (NOIRLab) for her scientific contributions, visionary leadership, and her commitment to broadening participation in astronomy and related sciences.

A renowned observational astronomer, Dr. Norman's early career research began as a graduate student at University of Washington. Her continued post-doc research with the National Science Foundation and the National Optical Astronomy Observatory led to the understanding of how very distant active galaxies and quasars observed in deep sky surveys are magnified by the gravitational lensing of massive galaxies in the foreground.

Using statistical gravitational lensing, Norman was able to show that our understanding of distance structures and quasars is significantly influenced by the mass of clusters of galaxies that reside closer by. Her work provided constraints on how observers are biased in our understanding of the distant universe because of foreground structures. This theme of understanding and mitigating bias extends into other parts of her

research and work. As one nominator wrote, “Dr. Norman’s record of achievement in astronomy is distinguished, wide-ranging, and deeply influential. Her research has advanced our understanding of large-scale structure in the universe, active galactic nuclei, and galaxy evolution.”

Beyond her scientific accomplishments, Dr. Norman is perhaps best known as one whose “commitment and leadership for educational, scientific and career success of diverse astronomers through institutionalized and sustained culture change is a model to all scientific leaders.” In 2010 her introduction of collaboration-scale “research inclusion” introduced astronomical lexicon and strengthened the American Astronomical Society’s (AAS) ethical guidelines and created practical tools to make large scientific collaborations more inclusive. Most notable was her election as the first African American woman President of the AAS (2024 - 2026) where one colleague praised Norman for her landmark contributions and leadership to “develop and advocate for solutions to major community-wide issues, ranging from workforce development to federal funding and policy to accountability in achieving equity and inclusion goals.”

Norman developed a series of white papers for the 2010 National Academies of Sciences (NAS), Engineering and Medicine Decadal Review focusing on how to address the underrepresentation of minorities in Astronomy. This detailed 10-year plan laid the foundation for a set of recommendations, including recommendations for partnerships between research universities and minority serving institutions as well as collaborations between national science societies and minority serving science societies, universities, and organizations. Based on results reported in the 2020 NAS Decadal Review on workforce development, accountability, and demographic reporting, Norman’s steadfast and passionate advocacy has provided the field with a pathway to make astronomy more inclusive and diverse.

Dr. Norman has served on numerous committees, spoken at many outreach events, and is a sought-after, invited speaker worldwide. She has led numerous Conference Proceedings, contributed to over a dozen science publication articles, and written many papers on policy and workforce positions. The impact of using her platform to create pathways for others and her commitment to increasing the participation in astronomy and related sciences of underrepresented students and professionals has given her a voice in shaping important conversations around equity, access, mentorship, and inclusivity in STEM.

2026 Las Cumbres Award

Michael Overacker to receive the 2026 Las Cumbres Amateur Outreach Award from the Astronomical Society of the Pacific.



Daly City, California - September 3, 2026 – Established by Wayne Rosing and Dorothy Largay, the **Las Cumbres Amateur Outreach Award** honors outstanding educational outreach by an amateur astronomer to K-12 children and the interested lay public. The 2026 award recipient is **Michael Overacker**, a retired Firefighter and professional photographer who is also an amateur astronomer. His passion for viewing the night sky extends beyond his personal enjoyment spending copious amounts of time sharing the universe with others.

Michael Overacker's love for the night sky began in high school but his outreach journey began in 2004 with two events. He built his first telescope, a 15" f4.8 Truss Dobsonian that became his main telescope. He then purchased a 21- passenger bus that he converted into his recognizable Astronomy Mobile Outreach Vehicle or AMOV as it is fondly called. Overacker's resulting astronomy program has allowed him to share not just his extensive knowledge of astronomy. A longtime colleague shares how he "personally attended some of Mike's outreach sessions and always have come away impressed with his knowledge, patience, equipment and abilities." He has an extensive collection of astronomical and solar telescopes that he shares during his educational sessions. Overacker's enthusiasm has led telescope manufacturers to have him test their equipment at his events. He is also known for his love of meteorites and gives many from his personal collection to young enthusiasts.

During the span of the last 20 or so years, Overacker's outreach efforts have included projects that promote efforts to make astronomy more accessible. In 2007 he supported the founder in the development of the Belk Astronomical Observatory at Lynchburg University's Claytor Nature Center. His cohort confirmed that Mike "gladly took on an essential role in the early phase of construction, installation of the telescope, software

integration and nighttime operation on a volunteer basis.” He also helped train local educators and docents on how to use the observatory equipment. In preparation of the 2017 Total Solar Eclipse, Overacker collected thousands of safe solar glasses and shared them with schools, civic organizations and the general public. His dedication led him to travel with solar telescopes and glasses from Virginia to North Carolina to let others view the eclipse. As a testament to Overacker’s enthusiasm, one cohort mentions how “a lot of people were content to watch the eclipse, but on this very hot day, Mike gladly gave up time he could have been viewing and photographing the phenomenon himself to show others the wonder through solar telescopes.”

Overacker is also not just a “member” of astronomy clubs. In 2003 he joined and was soon elected President of the Roanoke Valley Astronomical Society (RVAS.) Together with one of his long-standing outreach partners, he led events such as the viewing of the 2004 Venus Transit. He left to create his own club in 2008, the Star City Astronomy Network (SCAN) with the main purpose of astronomical viewing and outreach. He is also an enthusiastic member of the Astronomical League and reached the Master status in its outreach program, as well as Master Observer.

2026 Richard H. Emmons Award

Michael A. Reid to receive the 2026 Richard H. Emmons Award from the Astronomical Society of the Pacific for excellence in college astronomy teaching.



Daly City, California - September 3, 2026 - The Astronomical Society of the Pacific's **Richard H. Emmons Award** — established by Jeanne & Allan Bishop to honor Ms. Bishop's father, Richard Emmons, an astronomer with a lifelong dedication to astronomy education — is awarded annually to an individual demonstrating outstanding achievement in the teaching of college-level introductory astronomy for non-science majors. The 2026 recipient is **Prof. Michael A. Reid**, Associate Professor, Dunlap Department of Astronomy and Astrophysics, University of Toronto for his innovative, engaging, and inclusive teaching methods.

Prof. Reid obtained his PhD in Physics from McMaster University in Ontario, Canada, and kicked off his post doctorate years with a 2-year fellowship at the Submillimeter Array, one of the flagship observatories of the Center for Astrophysics through Harvard & Smithsonian. He started his teaching career as Associate Professor at McMaster University and since 2009 has reshaped the curricula at the University of Toronto. His approach of less lecturing and more engagement has led to a method, as one fellow nominator said “to not just convey astronomical facts, but to use astronomy as a tool to teach students how the scientific process works and how one can draw scientific conclusions from data. His view was that these are vital skills for all students, no matter their background.” This approach led Reid to create some of the most innovative and popular courses for non-science students at the college level and develop inclusive outreach programs.

One of his early courses allowed non-science major students to write a proposal for a project of their choosing and with the aid of robotic telescopes and other tools the experience led students to want more! One nominator shares these comments from other students: “Seriously one of the best and stimulating courses I have ever taken”; “I

personally thank the Department of Astronomy for offering this course”; and “I don’t really know how you could improve upon this amazing course”. Following this success, students requested more courses for non-science majors. Reid continued his innovative process and developed a novel and impactful set of classes that is soon to be an astronomy minor for non-science students. A series of courses included different methods of observation that worked together to demonstrate the many claims astronomers make about the universe. Reid created labs that used astronomical data from telescopes, CCD detectors, and spectrographs. Another lab experience for non-science majors had students use a famous plot from Edwin Hubble and their own measurements to determine the expansion rate of the universe.

Reid is praised not just for his innovative courses but his pedagogy emphasizing scientific inquiry, critical thinking and evidence-based reasoning. One nominator expresses how “Mike is an exceptional teacher in the most fundamental sense: his teaching consistently creates learning environments that are engaging, inclusive, intellectually rigorous, deeply motivating and fun.”

His approach extends beyond the classroom to share his passion with the public. Some of his outreach programs included partnerships with the Toronto Public Library, numerous schools and seniors’ groups, and the Vision of Sciences organization servicing Indigenous, Black, and other underserved students. These outreach efforts included mentoring underserved youth, operating a planetarium, creating a science festival, and distributing thousands of eclipse glasses.

Reid’s numerous achievements demonstrate his leadership skills throughout his community and around the world. He built an observatory for the university at the E. C. Carr Astronomical Observatory, which is operated by the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada. During the pandemic he pivoted and led the university team of educators from in-person to online teaching. When AI came along, he created a teacher’s handbook based on his own experiences. Internationally, he hosted and organized the AstroEdu 2023 conference, sponsored by the International Astronomical Union. Reid also supported the creation of WAISSA (West African International Summer School for Young Astronomers) a program co-founded by Bonaventure Okere and Linda Strubbe. One nominator states how proud Michael is of this work which supports students and educators across Africa in engaging with astronomy through innovative teaching methods.

2026 Maria and Eric Muhlmann Award

Dr. Shelley Adams Wright to receive the 2026 Maria and Eric Muhlmann Award from the Astronomical Society of the Pacific for her global and innovative leadership in astrophysical instrumentation research.



Daly City, California - September 3, 2026 – The **Maria and Eric Muhlmann Award** is given for highly significant observational results made possible by innovative advances in astronomical instrumentation, software, or observational infrastructure. The 2026 recipient of the **Muhlmann Award** is **Dr. Shelley Adams Wright** for her global and innovative leadership in astrophysical instrumentation research. A fellow colleague praised her accomplishments in “leading significant advances in instrument designs that have enabled new measurements in fields as diverse as galaxy evolution, supermassive black holes, exoplanets, cosmic rays, and SETI.”

Dr. Wright, Professor in the Department of Astronomy and Astrophysics and Department of Physics at University of California, San Diego, focuses on developing innovative instruments yielding groundbreaking observations in near-infrared and optical wavelengths. Her work has led directly to a deeper understanding of extragalactic sources and important experiments in astrobiology. One of her nominators described her as, “the best science-focused instrument builder of her generation.”

Wright’s contributions started in graduate school when she built a cryogenic engineering camera integral to commissioning one of the first laser guide adaptive optics (AO) facilities on 8-10-m class telescope. Installed on Keck Observatory instruments such as the SHARC engineering camera and ultimately her contribution on OSIRIS (OH-Suppressing Infra-Red Imaging Spectrograph) a facility-class integral field spectrograph designed for and used with AO. Her contributions to AO science instruments and integral field spectroscopy played a critical role in the characterization of the supermassive black hole in the center of the Milky Way, ultimately contributing to the Nobel Prize awarded to Dr. Andrea Ghez in 2020.

Leading the way toward the next-generation of AO-fed integral field spectrographs providing ultra-high sensitivity and broader wavelength ranges, Wright is the Principle Investigator for Liger, the newest instrument being developed for Keck Observatory. Leveraging lessons learned from older integral field spectrograph models, Liger's main goal is to use improved AO and new large-format near-infrared detectors to measure the motion, chemistry, and structure of cosmic targets — from distant exoplanets and black holes to early galaxies and hidden dark matter. Wright's leadership qualities were noted by a nominator for "the best-run instrument project in the Keck collaboration (by far) with a science-driven design, carefully-phased risk reduction, a mature budget and schedule, and a world-class team that Prof. Wright has assembled."

Dr. Wright also has the distinction of being a pioneer in the field of optical SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) instrumentation. While a student, she helped develop an instrument for Lick Observatory that scans thousands of individual stars and galaxies for laser pulses in the visible spectrum. Wright was the Principal Investigator for NIROSETI, the first ever instrument designed to search for laser signals in near-infrared light. Most revolutionary is the latest project she is leading, Panoramic SETI, a joint collaboration with UC San Diego, UC Berkeley, Harvard University, and Caltech that uses innovative wide-field 0.5m telescopes with unique detector technologies. These budget friendly, smaller telescopes capture a wide spot of brief flashes of Cherenkov radiation and also of high-energy gamma rays from deep space. While built to search for signs of extraterrestrial advanced technology, instruments like NIROSETI and PANOSSETI also break new ground in time-domain astrophysics to capture explosive events by opening a window to observe the universe on sub-second and nanosecond time scales, something traditional telescopes completely miss.

Alongside her many additional awards and honors, Wright is a sought-after speaker with over 70 invitations around the world. She has taught for almost 25 years, created outreach activities and TED talks, advised many undergrad and graduate students and has extensive media coverage in such distinguished publications as *TIME Magazine*, *Physics Today*, *Sky & Telescope*, and *Air & Space Magazine*. Wright was awarded the 2022 SETI Institute Drake Award in recognition of her decades-long pioneering work in developing innovative optical and near-infrared instruments for searching for extraterrestrial intelligence.

2026 Robert J. Trumpler

2026 Robert J. Trumpler Award is given to Jesse Han, a recent recipient of a PhD degree, for his significant contributions to Galactic astronomy.



Photo courtesy of Jen Arthur

Daly City, California - September 3, 2026 – The **Robert J. Trumpler Award** is presented to a recent recipient of a PhD degree whose research is considered unusually important to astronomy. **Dr. Jesse Han** is the recipient of the **2026 Robert J. Trumpler Award**, having received his doctorate in astronomy and physics from Harvard University and is currently a Stanford Science Fellow at Stanford University. Han's thesis research was directed towards understanding the formation and evolution of galaxies across cosmic time using the knowledge to interpret observations of the structure of the Milky Way. Han's significant recent contributions to Galactic astronomy were summarized by one of his professors, who wrote, "I regard Jesse's thesis work as the most impactful. He has solved multiple long-standing puzzles and has presented a new, comprehensive view of the outer Galaxy."

Astronomers have long observed that the Milky Way's disk is warped and bent, but the cause was unknown. Through innovative observation and simulation, Han discovered that the surrounding dark matter and star halos are tilted. In his landmark paper, "*A tilted dark halo origin of the Galactic disk warp and flare*," he showed that the gravitational pull from a tilted and "doubly broken" halo drives the disk's warp." His findings, published in *Nature Astronomy*, exposed crucial clues on how hidden dark matter shapes our Galaxy, suggesting it may have experienced a dramatic merger with a smaller galaxy some 10 billion years ago.

Another outcome of Han's research was the discovery that a significant fraction of hyper-velocity stars (HVSs) around the Milky Way originated in the Large Magellanic Cloud (LMC), a dwarf galaxy orbiting the Milky Way. Using high-precision 3D trajectory data from the Gaia space telescope, Han tracked these fast-moving stars backward in time to discover almost half of the HVS paths led straight back to the Large Magellanic Cloud (LMC). The only model that explains the speed, quantity, and position of these stars is the presence of a supermassive black hole hidden inside the LMC. Scientists previously did not know if dwarf galaxies like the LMC could host supermassive black holes. Proving one exists in the LMC reshapes our understanding of galaxy formation, black hole evolution, and how galaxies interact. A collaborator and colleague observed that "Jesse is now leading several observation efforts to directly identify this black hole, which would be a spectacular result, making it the second closest known supermassive black hole, behind only the one in the center of the Milky Way."

Han is an emerging leader in the field, taking the initiative in graduate school to lead an important NASA white paper to use the Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope and create a near infrared map of the entire sky. The project - the **N**ext-generation **A**ll-sky **N**ear-infrared **C**ommunity **S**urvey (NANCY) is a collaboration with over 200 scientists. Han's team is building widespread partnerships across ground and space-based observatories to establish NANCY as shared scientific infrastructure. In describing Han's leadership, a close colleague wrote, "I expect the work to have a long-lasting impact on the field, and I fully expect Jesse to become a leader in Galactic dynamics and near-field cosmology."

Han has already published numerous papers, received awards and distinctions, and served as Principle Investigator (PI) and co-PI on seven projects utilizing Chandra and Hubble. He was featured in a short segment with NPR's *All Things Considered* about uncovering evidence of a supermassive black hole in our neighboring Large Magellanic Galaxy. Alongside his academic career, Han is also an accomplished rock and ice climber, and active musician in the Bay Area.

About the Astro Society/Astronomical Society of the Pacific

The Astro Society, founded as the Astronomical Society of the Pacific (ASP) 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 include the Astro Society social media channel, and support for 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.

For more information, visit our website at astrosociety.org/awards

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