Position of the Board of the Faculty of Science and Engineering regarding the recommendations of the Peer Review Committee (Evaluation Board) Astronomy

We thank the Evaluation Board (EB) for their thorough, thoughtful, and helpful evaluation. We react below to the EB’s recommendations.

*In connection with the risks listed above, the EB advises the Kapteyn Institute to be prepared to invest further in emerging fields where it already has programmatic strengths, and to avoid overextending the number of projects and fields of study, and spreading its expertise too thinly.*

The staff and management team of the Kapteyn Institute regularly re-examine their strategic plans in light of internal and external developments on time scales of roughly every 18 months. The Institute is well aware of the risks of spreading themselves too thinly and the need to preserve Kapteyn’s core competences and critical mass in projects and fields. At the same time the Institute keeps an eye on major developments to determine where we can make significant impact.

*Given the fact that Groningen is relatively far from The Hague and government officials, the EB advises that the experienced and possibly emeritus Dutch scientists of the Institute mentor the younger, mostly foreign staff members, to help them play influential roles in policy, strategy, and decision making at the national level.*

The Kapteyn management team is constantly looking for opportunities to introduce younger staff to local, national, and international strategy, policy-, and decision-making. Key parts of this effort include increasing networking opportunities and ensuring a reasonable level of Dutch language fluency in the staff. This approach of the Institute is seen as a good practice within the FSE.

*The Kapteyn Institute is advised to continue its strong efforts in outreach and valorization, and to transmit lessons from best practice to other nodes in the NOVA network (especially in valorization).*

The institute has every intention of continuing these efforts. Its valorization efforts are supported by continuing interaction with the broader University of Groningen community, the northern Dutch provinces, and industry – a process that will continue for the coming years. Of course, the institute always welcomes discussion with our NOVA partner institutes regarding best practice in valorization and outreach.

*The Kapteyn Institute is advised to carefully monitor grant funding activity, and be prepared to work to diversify funding streams should the normal channels dry up due to demographic and other factors.*

The institute continually monitors grant funding activity. Its contacts inside NWO are very helpful in this regard, as well as the Talent and Development Office at the University of Groningen. In 2018 the FSE has introduced its Talent Development policy that every staff member has a ‘Personal Funding Plan’ that will be discussed every year in the R&D-interview.
The Kapteyn Institute is advised to continue current efforts to diversify its faculty in age and gender.

The Institute has increased its female-male staff ratio to levels well above the national average in the past years. The University's Rosalind Franklin Fellowship program for female tenure track positions has been important to achieve this gender ratio. The Board of FSE is in regular discussion with the Institute regarding possibilities for future faculty hires.

The Kapteyn Institute, with NOVA, should extend a separate career development set of activities to its postdocs, building on its highly successful program for its PhD students.

The Faculty of Science and Engineering at the University of Groningen is building a postdoc community, including a postdoc council. This community focusses on career development training and other opportunities to prepare postdocs for the next steps in their careers. The Institute will also work with NOVA to find specific steps, including the annual career weekend, that improve the career perspectives of Kapteyn's postdoctoral community.

The Kapteyn Institute is advised to continue to monitor the ratio of PhD students to supervisory staff to ensure the quality of graduate education remains high.

The Institute is pulled between the current programmatic need to increase the PhD student population to fund their research activities and the desire to keep an excellent” PhD program. The institute has recently instituted a PhD recruitment process that has both streamlined and improved the recruitment efforts. Improving the intake of masters students has a positive impact on the institute’s PhD program: a short film, advertising the MSc program to international students, has gone online in the autumn of 2017.