

International Asteroid Search Campaign: An Educational Outreach Program in Astronomy for High Schools & Colleges

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The International Asteroid Search Campaign (IASC, fondly nicknamed "Isaac") is an Internet-based program for high schools and colleges. Within hours of acquisition astronomical CCD images are made available via the Internet to participating schools around the world. Under the guidance of their teachers, students analyze the images with free software tools, searching for new asteroids and confirmations of near-Earth objects (NEOs). These discoveries are reported to the Minor Planet Center (MPC; Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, Harvard), which gives the students published recognition in its MPC circulars. Since the first campaign in October 2006, students participating in IASC have discovered 71 main belt asteroids, and conducted 1,376 follow-up observations of comets and near-earth asteroids for the Near-Earth Object Observation Program (NASA JPL).

IASC is an international educational outreach program provided at no cost to the participating schools. The Blackboard Learning System™ at Hardin-Simmons University (Abilene, TX) is used to administer the program. It is a collaboration of the University, Astronomical Research Institute (Charleston, IL), Lawrence Hall of Science (Hands-On Universe, University of California at Berkeley), and *Astrometrica* (Herbert Raab, Austria). Participating are high schools and colleges from 9 countries including China, Germany, Italy, Japan, Morocco, Poland, Portugal, Russia, and the United States.

The long term goal is to transform IASC into the International *Astronomy* Search Campaign. Additional campaigns are under development to search for Kuiper Belt objects (KBOs), supernovae (SNe), and active galactic nuclei (AGN). Just as with asteroids and NEOs, students will receive published recognition for their original discoveries.

High schools and colleges interested in participating in future IASC search campaigns should contact the program director, J. Patrick Miller, at pmiller@hsutx.edu.