



SETI INSTITUTE

Mission 12

Cultural Aspects of the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (CSETI)

Resource Card for Political Leaders

Group Purpose: Imagine yourselves as political leaders. If a definite signal from an extraterrestrial intelligence is received by SETI scientists, it will have a very real impact on the people of your city, state, and country. Printed below are statements and questions about fears that your people might voice. Your work at this conference is to: 1) read over the list and add politically oriented concerns of your own and 2) come up with a written list of recommendations (from the perspective of political leaders) to SETI scientists about how they should tell the world they have received a message. What should they say, how should they say it, who should they tell, and how will they deal with these concerns in the best way possible?

1. Would extraterrestrials see us as friends in the same manner that Kublai Khan viewed Marco Polo?
2. Would extraterrestrials have developed a super-civilization? If so, would they treat us like inferior people, or as equals?
3. How will we cope with an advanced civilization? Will we ever be able to talk to one another?
4. Will there be a lot of misunderstandings?
5. Communication will not be simultaneous because of the time delays caused by the vast distances. Will it take so long to talk back and forth that we will become disinterested and not even remember why we were so excited when we received the original communication?
6. Will extraterrestrials be welcoming us to the galactic community?
7. Will extraterrestrials have new, exciting, valuable information to share with us?



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Resource Card for Military Leaders

Group Purpose: Imagine yourselves as military leaders. If a definite signal from an extraterrestrial intelligence is received by SETI scientists, it will be of concern to the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines. Printed here are statements and questions about fears that your people might have. Your work at this conference is to: 1) read over the list and add other military oriented concerns of your own and 2) assemble a written list of recommendations (from the perspective of military leaders) to SETI scientists about how they should tell the world they have received a message. What should they say, how should they say it, who should they tell, and how should they deal with these concerns in the best way possible?

1. Does the discovery of an extraterrestrial intelligence pose a threat to our country or to the world?
2. Does the message from extraterrestrial intelligence pose a threat to our country or to the world?
3. Should we quickly band together to develop a global force against possible extraterrestrial invasions?
4. Should we try to develop technology to invade them before they invade us (even though it may take over 100 years to develop such technology, and hundreds or thousands of years to reach them on any spacecraft)?
5. Is there technology that the extraterrestrials will give us that can be used for national defense or offense? What if other countries learn about this technology before we do?
6. Should we keep or deter other individuals and groups (especially terrorist groups) from obtaining the extraterrestrials' message?
7. Should radio telescopes and other transmitters be placed under military control until we learn of the nature of the message?



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Resource Card for Media Persons

Group Purpose: Imagine yourselves as media people. If a definite signal from an extraterrestrial intelligence is received by SETI scientists, it will have a very real impact on the media—newspapers, magazines, the news, and movies. Printed here are statements and concerns that you as reporters and entertainment people will have that will affect your profession. Your work at this conference is to read over the list and add your own media-related concerns. Your final task is to assemble a written list of recommendations (from the perspective of members of the media) to SETI scientists about how they should tell the world they have received a message. What should they say, how should they say it, who should they tell, and how should they deal with these concerns in the best way possible?

1. Will reporters and media people sensationalize the truth so much that people will become confused?
2. What will be the focus of the media?
3. Will the media focus only on negative aspects?
4. Will information be blown out of proportion? Will the media compete for the best wild story or movie instead of reporting the facts? Will they get in the way of the scientists?
5. Are the media capable of educating the public about the improbability of interstellar travel or interstellar invasions?
6. Will the facts be lost and gossip or speculation prevail?
7. How can the media help to allow the public to communicate with the extraterrestrials?



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Resource Card for the Children

Group Purpose: Imagine yourselves as the children of the world. If a definite signal from an extraterrestrial intelligence is received by SETI scientists, it will have a very real impact on the children of the world. Printed here are statements, concerns, questions, and fears that young people might have. Your work at this conference is to read over the list and add the fears that your group comes up with. Your final task is to assemble a written list of recommendations (from the perspective of children) to SETI scientists about how they should tell the world they have received a message. What should they say, how should they say it, who should they tell, and how should they deal with these concerns and fears in the best way possible?

1. It is likely that the extraterrestrials will invade us, so I will not have the chance to live a normal life.
2. What is the most appropriate way to respond?
3. What if my parents, teachers, and other adults are afraid? Will they scare off any extraterrestrials and prevent the possibility of ever making contact?
4. If there are extraterrestrial children, would they be like me and have the same kinds of concerns as I do?
5. Would adults try to convince us to react and feel a certain way about Earth having received a message from space?
6. Would extraterrestrials bring us interesting new kinds of music and television shows?
7. Do they look like us?
8. Do they have pets? What would their pets be like?



Mission 12

Cultural Aspects of the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (CAsEti)

Resource Card for the Future Thinkers

Group Purpose: Imagine yourselves as future thinkers with positive attitudes. If a definite signal from an extraterrestrial intelligence is received by SETI scientists, it will have a very real impact on all people. Many people will express fears and anxieties, but some people will readily accept the news without fear. Some will be delighted, stimulated, excited, and joyful! Printed below are statements that express how you think the world would accept the news of a message from space. Your work at this conference is to read over the list and add any other ideas you think of. Your final task is to assemble a list of recommendations to SETI scientists about how they should tell the world they have received a message. What should they say, how should they say it, who should they tell, and how should they deal with these concerns in the best possible way?

1. Will humanity choose to believe that it is not an isolated, planetary tribe fearing the knowledge that other intelligent life-forms exist?
2. Today an international organization, the United Nations, exists. Could we be part of a similar galactic community tomorrow?
3. Are the people in this day and age a great deal changed from people who lived at the beginning of the previous century? What will it mean to us if an extraterrestrial intelligence is detected?
4. Is superstition gradually giving way to enlightenment, and is science becoming more widely appreciated, even if it is not widely practiced? What effect would the discovery of an extraterrestrial intelligence have on this?
5. Is humanity today a searching, exploring, learning society that consciously seeks to expand its horizons of knowledge and experience?
6. Is humanity today equipped by historical experience to assess and assimilate whatever may be encountered?



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CSETI Conference—Worksheet

We, the _____ group, have discussed our concerns, hopes, fears, and perspectives about receiving a message from an extraterrestrial intelligence. The participating members of this group are:

The following is a list of our recommendations that SETI scientists might consider, in advance, as they prepare their plan to communicate with humanity in the event a signal is detected. Each of our recommendations is accompanied by our reason, or reasons, for making the recommendation.

First recommendation:

Reason:

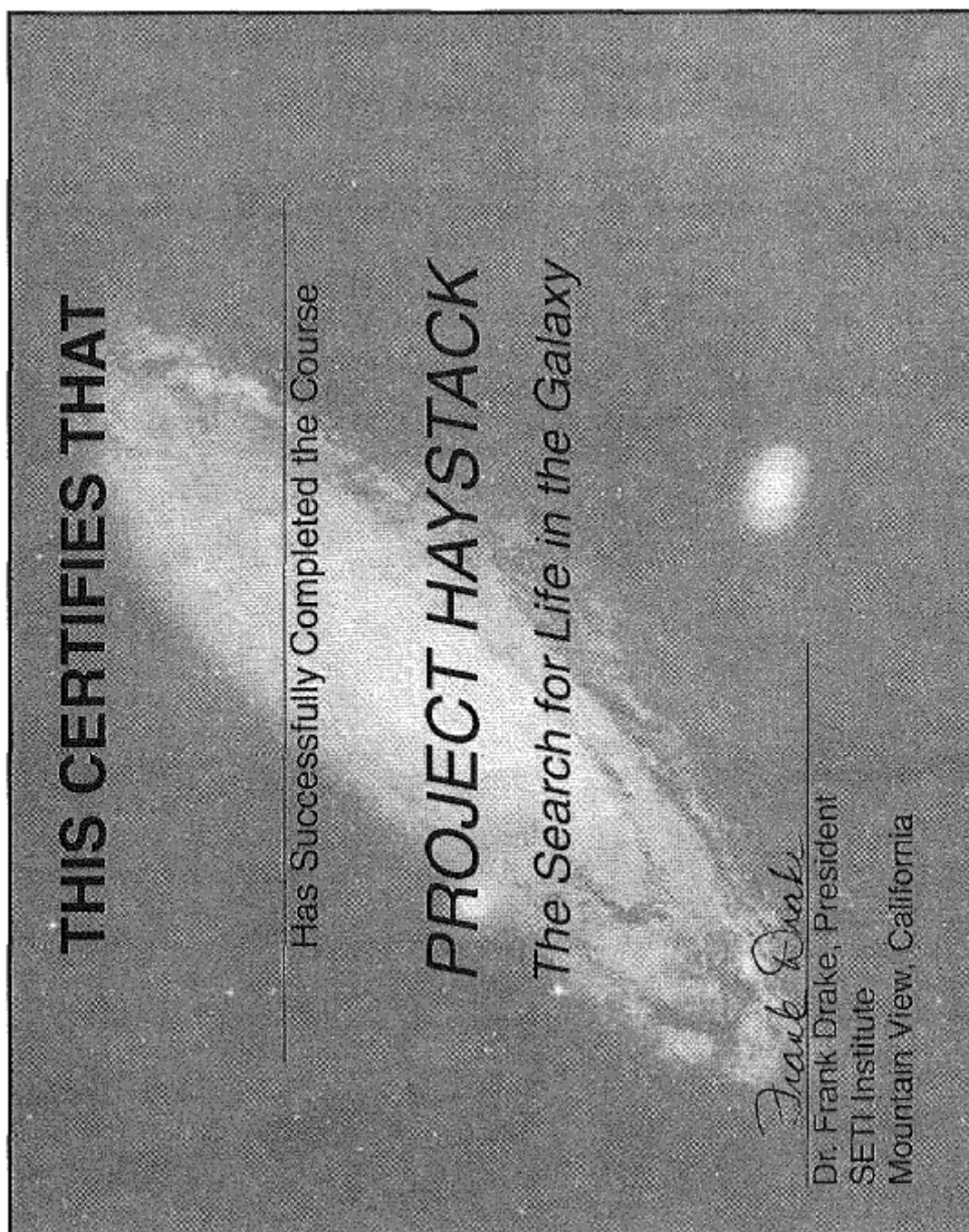
Second recommendation:

Reason:

Third recommendation:

Reason:

Achievement Award





THE SETI ACADEMY

CERTIFIES THAT

HAS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED THE COURSE
THE EVOLUTION OF A PLANETARY SYSTEM

ON _____ 20 _____

Jill Tarter
DR. JILL TARTER, CHIEF SCIENTIST

Thomas Pierson
MR. THOMAS PIERSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR