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CSU telescope helps Canadian star gazer win meteorite

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A Canadian high school student has used the remote-access telescope at Charles Sturt University (CSU) to win the Senior Physics Prize in the Province of Manitoba, and membership of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC).

During 2007 Ms Alaina Edwards, a Year 12 student at West Kildonan Collegiate high school in Winnipeg, used the CSU Telescope on the University's Bathurst Campus, remotely-controlled through the Internet, to study and analyse the suspected variable star, SAO 154490.

Ms Edwards then entered the Manitoba Schools Science Symposium in April 2008 and won two awards for her technical paper. She won gold in the senior physics category, and the Best Astronomy-Related Project prize, from the RASC. She has also been invited to read her paper at the July RASC meeting in Winnipeg, and her award-winning presentation can be found at the [CSU Telescope website](#).

"Entering the competition was a fantastic experience. I want to thank my science teacher, Mr Edwards (no relation), and Associate Professor David McKinnon from CSU's School of Teacher Education for all their help," Ms Edwards said. "Dr McKinnon mentored me through the investigation, teaching me how to reduce the data and interpret the results.

"The award included a certificate, CA\$100, membership with the RASC, and an actual meteorite, which I keep on my desk at home to remind me of the satisfaction I got from understanding how to do the science. Now I just want to continue my research." Ms Edwards donated the cash prize to the science department at her school.

Professor McKinnon said, "This is a wonderful result for an outstanding student. She demonstrated many qualities we try to encourage students to develop in science and highlights the educational value of the resources Charles Sturt University can offer students around the world. I hope Alaina will have a very successful career in science if she chooses to pursue her interest in space."

This is the second time that an award has been won through use of the CSU Telescope. In 2005, Mr James Sinclair won the NSW Science Teachers' Association senior physics prize as a Year 10 student. In 2006, he was invited to present his work at the Curriculum Corporation Annual Conference in Adelaide.

Anyone with Internet access can visit the [CSU Remote Telescope](#), through which students in Australia, Holland, the United Kingdom and Canada can study the Moon, planets, clusters of stars and galaxies as far as 450 to 600 million light years away from Earth.

It is now four hundred years since Galileo Galilei turned his telescope to the heavens and started modern astronomy. To celebrate this turning point in human knowledge and endeavour, 2009 has been designated as the [International Year of Astronomy](#).

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Media Note:

Contact CSU Media to arrange interviews with Associate Professor David McKinnon. Professor McKinnon is Chair of the International Astronomical Union Working Group, School Astronomy Education (including Teacher Education), Commission 46: Astronomy Education and Development.

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