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STROBE-X: X-ray Timing & Spectroscopy on Dynamical Timescales from Microseconds to Years

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STROBE-X: X-ray Timing & Spectroscopy on Dynamical Timescales from Microseconds to Years ()

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We describe a probe-class mission concept that provides an unprecedented view of the X-ray sky, performing timing and 0.2-30 keV spectroscopy over timescales from microseconds to years. The Spectroscopic Time-Resolving Observatory for Broadband Energy X-rays (STROBE-X) comprises three primary instruments. The first uses an array of lightweight optics (3-m focal length) that concentrate incident photons onto solid state detectors with CCD-level (85-130 eV) energy resolution, 100 ns time resolution, and low background rates to cover the 0.2-12 keV band. This technology is scaled up from NICER, with enhanced optics to take advantage of the longer focal length of STROBE-X. The second uses large-area collimated silicon drift detectors, developed for ESA's LOFT, to cover the 2-30 keV band. These two instruments each provide an order of magnitude improvement in effective area compared with its predecessor (NICER and RXTE, respectively). Finally, a sensitive sky monitor triggers pointed observations,

provides high duty cycle, high time resolution, high spectral resolution monitoring of the X-ray sky with ~20 times the sensitivity of the RXTE ASM, and enables multi-wavelength and multi-messenger studies on a continuous, rather than scanning basis. We include updated instrument designs resulting from the GSFC IDL run in November 2017. For the first time, the broad coverage provides simultaneous study of thermal components, non-thermal components, iron lines, and reflection features from a single platform for accreting black holes at all scales. The enormous collecting area allows detailed studies of the dense matter equation of state using both thermal emission from rotation-powered pulsars and harder emission from X-ray burst oscillations. The combination of the wide-field monitor and the sensitive pointed instruments enables observations of potential electromagnetic counterparts to LIGO/Virgo and neutrino events. Extragalactic science, such as constraining bulk metallicity of medium to high redshift clusters and nearby compact groups and unprecedented timing investigations of active galactic nuclei, is also obtained.

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