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A view of the universe from SIUE's campus

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A view of the universe from SLUE's campus

Recent discoveries about the universe continue to fascinate the public. Whether drunks of new planets are found in distant solar systems or there is the continued speculation about the possibility of parallel universes, these findings continue to grab the imagination of adults and children alike.

One of the major misconceptions about the universe is created by Hollywood. When films portray the asteroid in the ancient belt between Mars and Jupiter, they appear as close to Earth as the moon and it seems near to each other. That, according to Sabby, is not correct.

“In fact, asteroids are on average a million miles away from the Earth,” he said. “When I go to see a movie with friends I have to issue a disclaimer that I will probably argue and fight with the other audience members because of its inaccuracy when it comes to physics and astronomy.”

In addition to its size, the context of the universe is another issue that still fascinates Sabby. “In many ways of studying the universe, its size is something that still puzzles my mind,” he said.

One of the most difficult things to figure out about the universe is its size. For example, we feel that our sun is quite close, yet it takes light and a half million to travel from Earth to Sun. Given that light travels 186,000 miles per second, it’s quite remarkable, and means that the distance between the sun and the earth is about 45.7 million miles. But that is the universe! We actually know when the boundaries of the universe lie. By looking at the back- ground radiation we have been able to determine that the universe is 13.72 billion years old.

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