



**UNIVERSITÉ
DE GENÈVE**

FACULTÉ DES SCIENCES

Département de physique
nucléaire et corpusculaire



European Research Council
Established by the European Commission



SWISS NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION



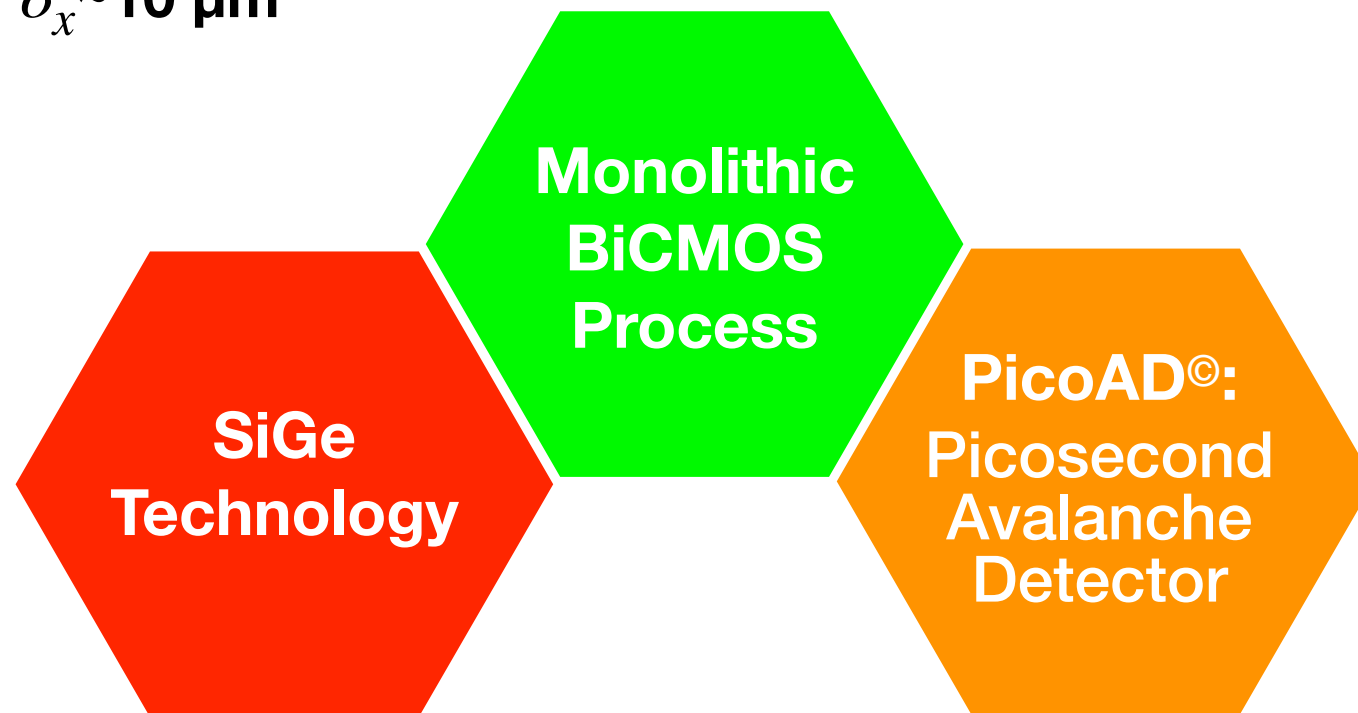
Picosecond Time Stamping in Fully-Monolithic Highly-Granular Pixel Detectors

Matteo Milanesio

10th October 2025 - FATA 2025 - INFN Catania

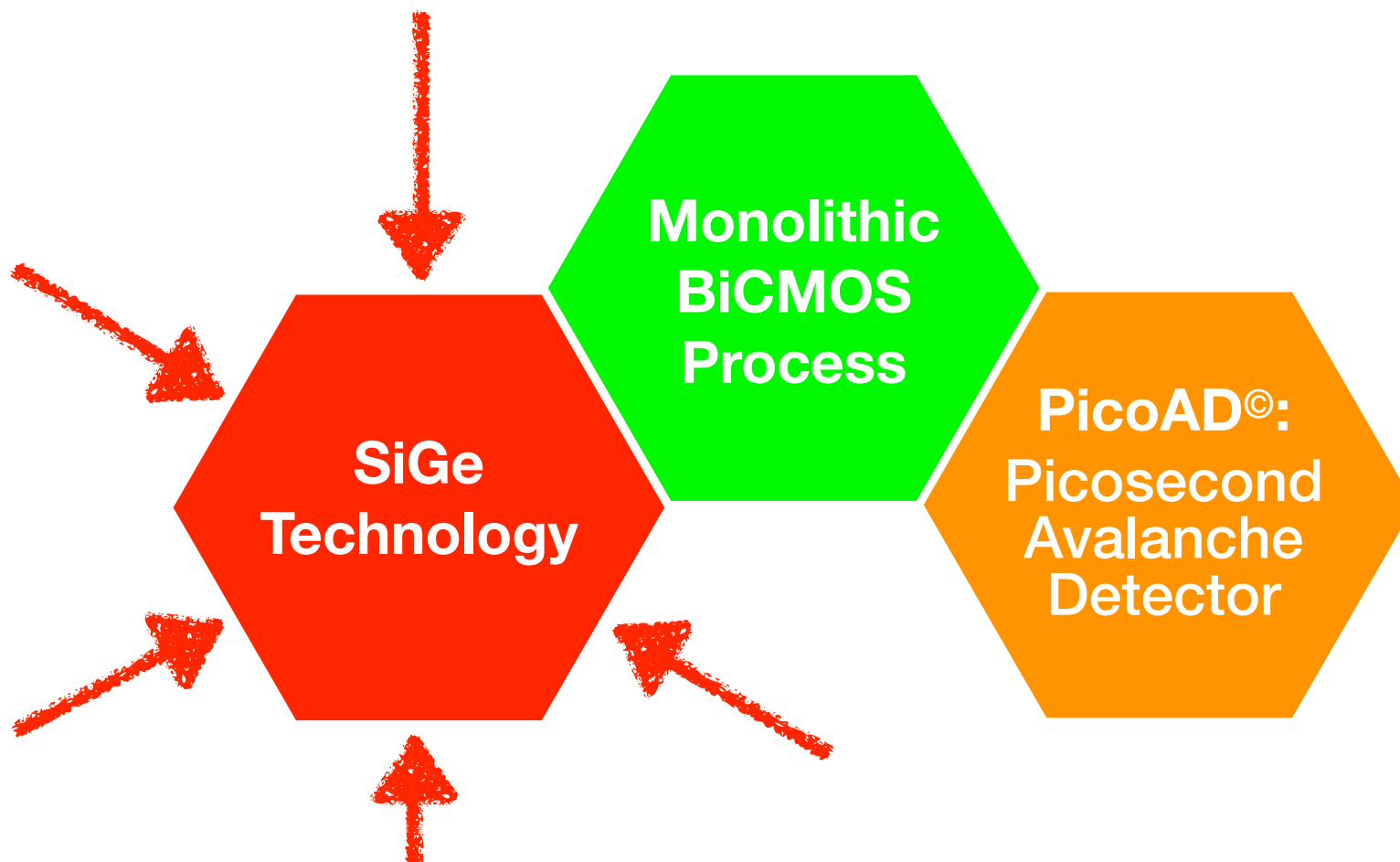
The MONOLITH ERC Project

- We want to measure **charged particles** with:
 - **time** resolution $\sigma_t \sim 10$ ps
 - **space** resolution $\sigma_x \sim 10$ μm



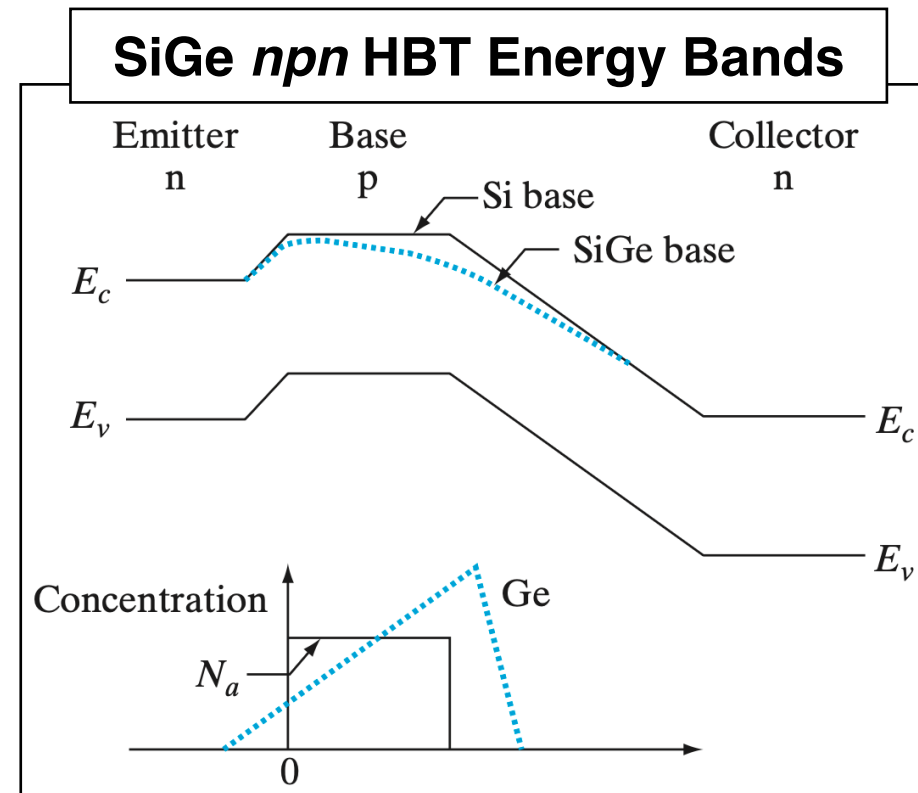


SiGe Technology

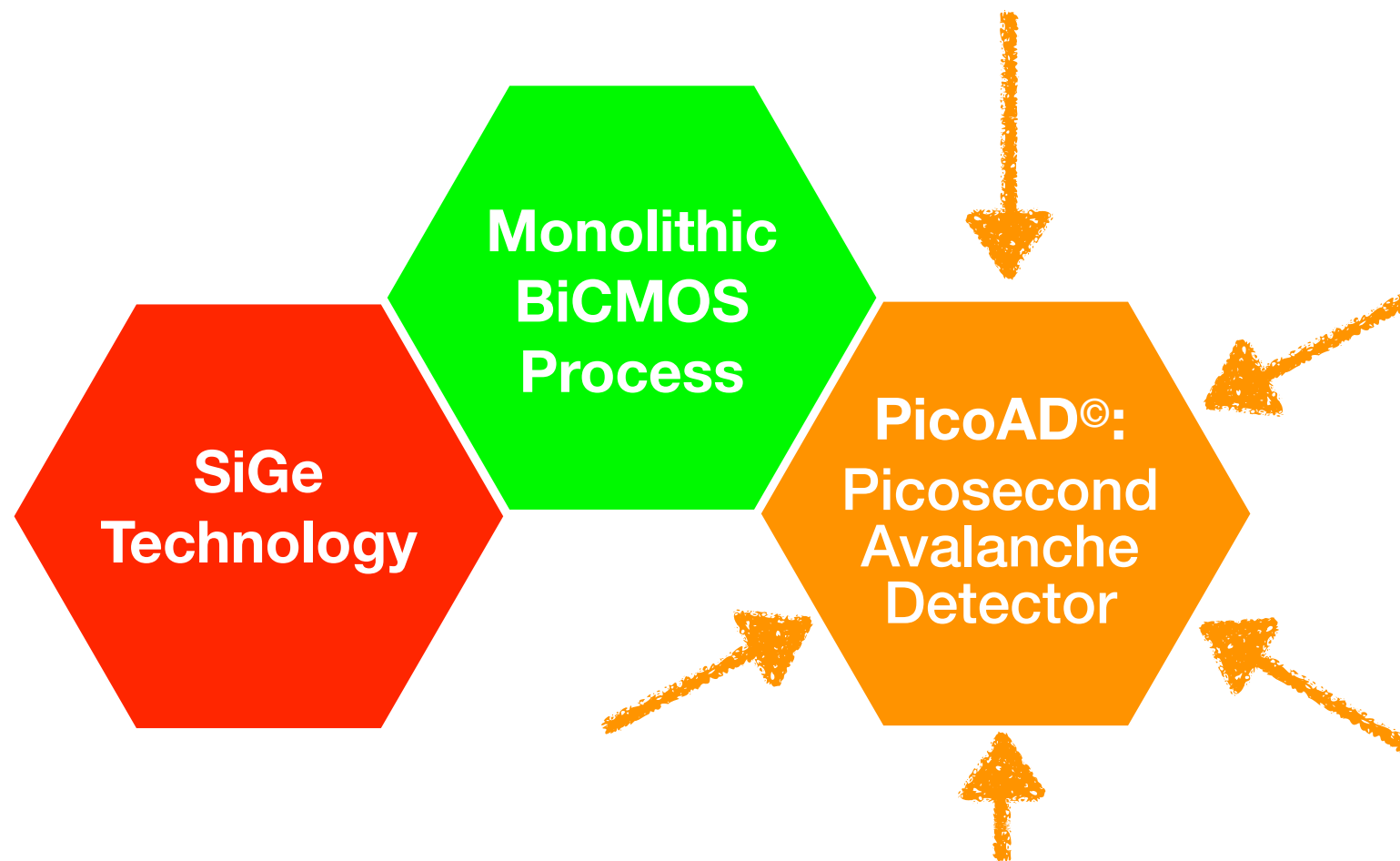


- A **grading of Germanium** creates a small electric field in the base of a **Bipolar Junction Transistor (BJT)**:
 - The charges move via **drift**
 - The **transit time** in the base is shorter
 - **Higher current gain β** than a BJT
 - Thicker base than a BJT
 - **Smaller base resistance R_b** than a BJT

$$\sigma_{\text{Jitter}} = \frac{\sigma_V}{dV/dt} \propto C_{\text{tot}} \sqrt{\frac{k_1}{\beta} + k_2 R_b}$$

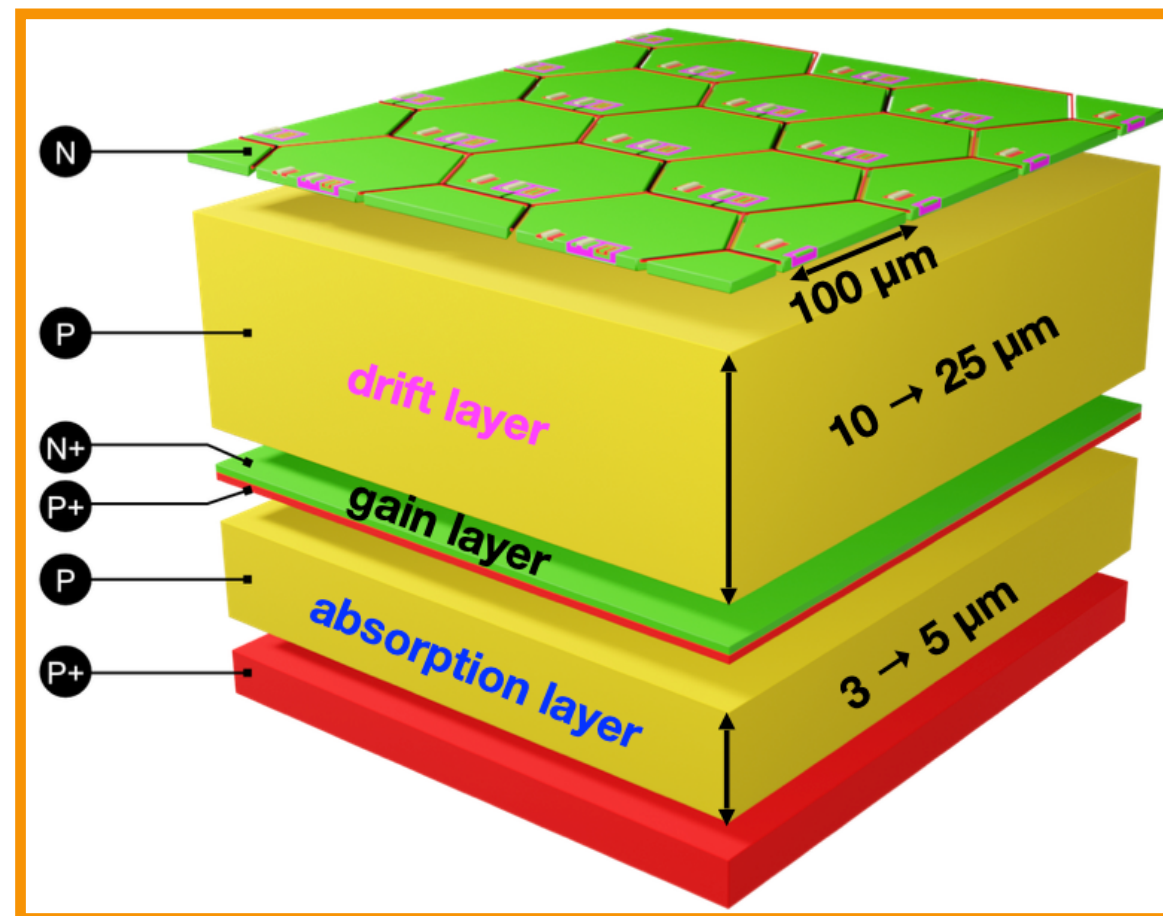


PicoAD[©] Sensor Concept



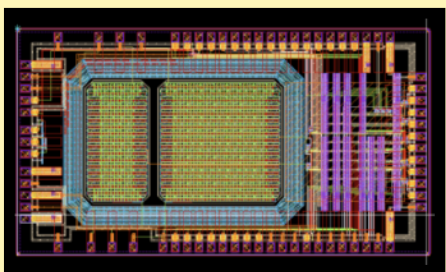
PicoAD[©] Sensor Concept

- Multi-Junction **Picosecond Avalanche Detector[©]**
- Continuous and deep gain layer:
 - Decorrelation from implant size
 - High **pixel granularity**
 - Better **spatial resolution**
 - Only a small fraction of the charge gets amplified
 - Reduced **charge-collection noise** σ_{Landau}



Timing Prototypes without Gain Layer

2016

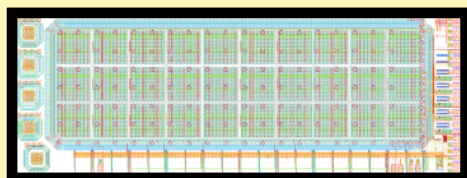


- Square pixel 900 μm
- Discriminated output

200 ps

[JINST 13 P04015](#)

2017

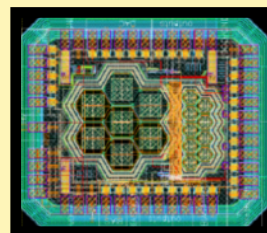


- Square pixels 500 μm
- 100 ps TDC + I/O logic

110 ps

[JINST 14 P07013](#) [JINST 14 P02009](#)

2018

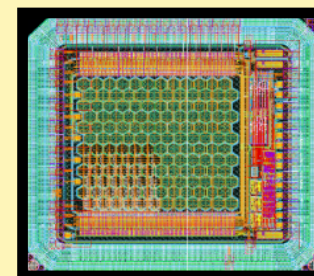


- Hexagonal pixels 130 μm
- Discriminated outputs

45 ps

[JINST 14 P11008](#) [JINST 15 P11025](#)

2020

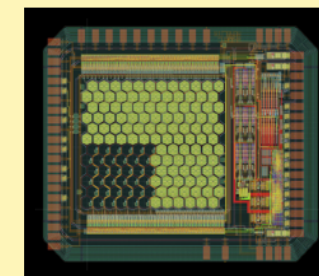


- Hexagonal pixels 65 μm
- 30 ps TDC + I/O logic
- 4 analog outputs

36 ps

[JINST 17 P02019](#)

2022



- Hexagonal pixels 65 μm
- Improved frontend
- 4 analog outputs

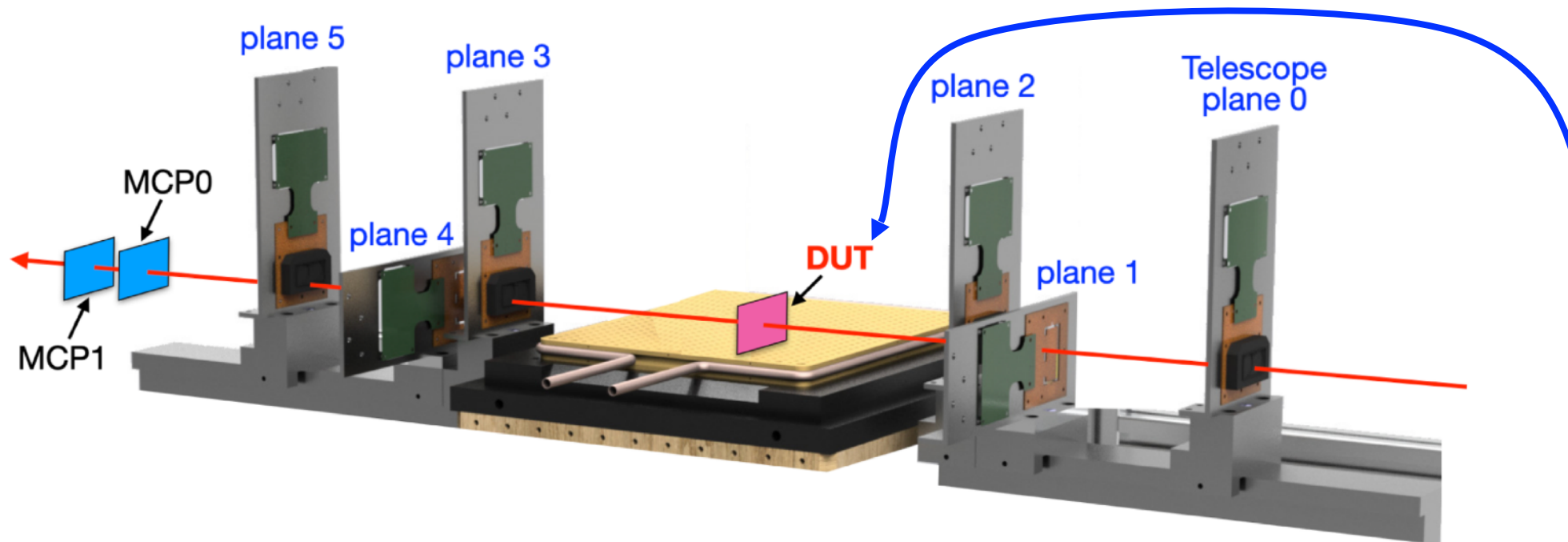
20 ps

[JINST 18 P03047](#) [JINST 19 P01014](#)
[JINST 19 P04029](#) [JINST 19 P07036](#)

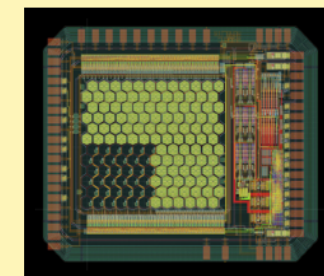
**In this
presentation**

Test Beam: Experimental Setup

- October 2022: SPS Testbeam with 180 GeV/c pions (**MIP**)
- Measure **efficiency** and **time resolution**



2022



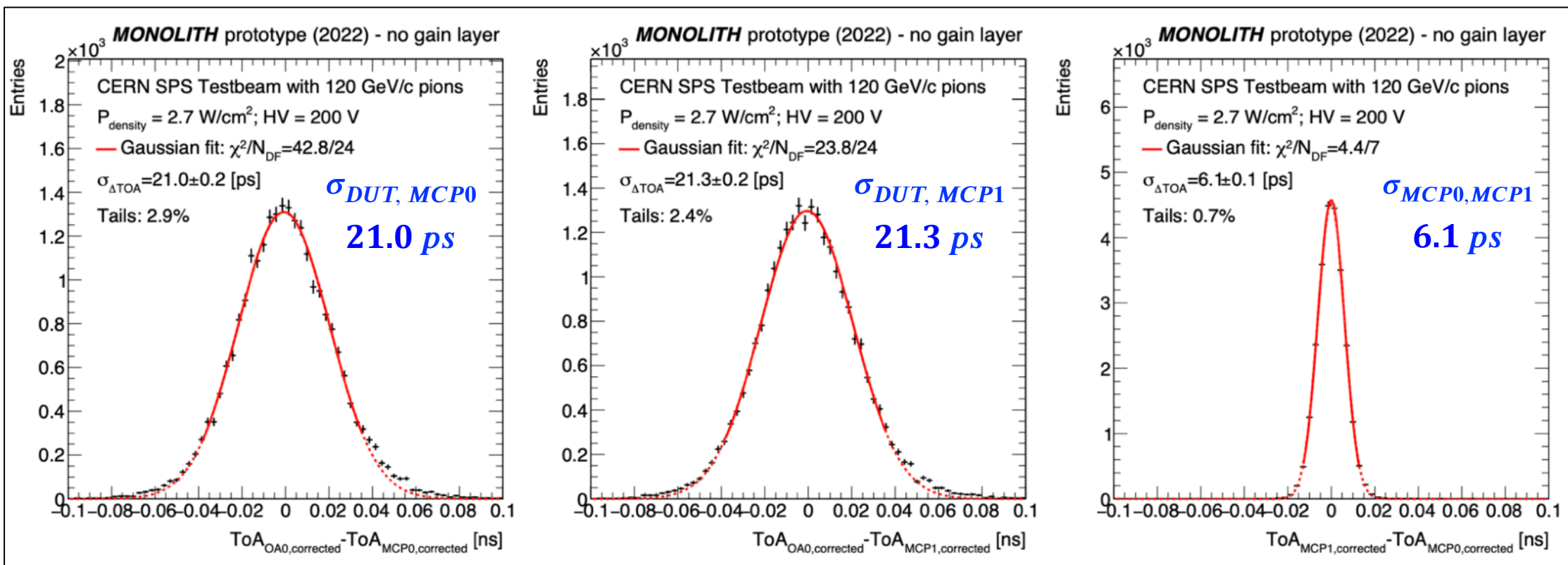
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20 ps

[JINST 18 P03047](#) [JINST 19 P01014](#)
[JINST 19 P04029](#) [JINST 19 P07036](#)

- **UNIGE FE-I4 telescope** to provide the spatial information ($\sigma_{x,y} \sim 10 \mu\text{m}$)
- **Two PMT-MCPs** ($\sigma_t \sim 5 \text{ ps}$) to provide the timing reference

Time Resolution Distributions



- Very **Gaussian** distributions after time walk correction
- Simultaneous fit to extract the time resolution of **DUT**, **MCP0**, **MCP1**:

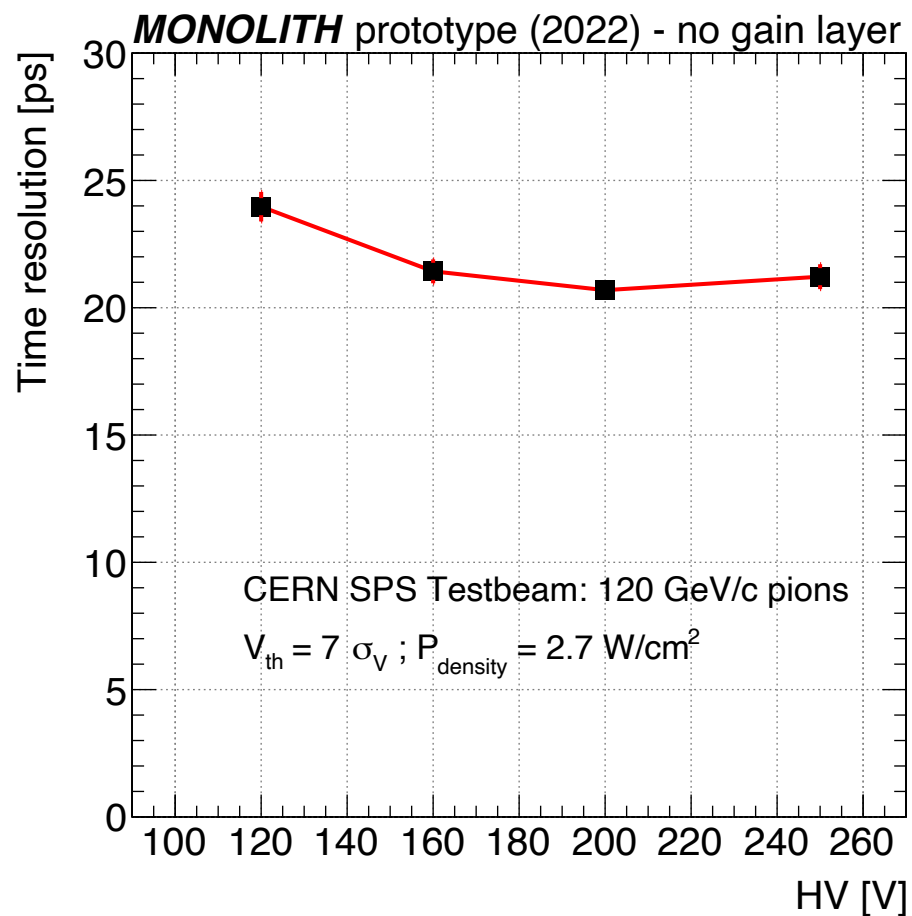
$$\begin{cases} \sigma_{\text{DUT, MCP0}}^2 = \sigma_{\text{DUT}}^2 + \sigma_{\text{MCP0}}^2 \\ \sigma_{\text{DUT, MCP1}}^2 = \sigma_{\text{DUT}}^2 + \sigma_{\text{MCP1}}^2 \\ \sigma_{\text{MCP0, MCP1}}^2 = \sigma_{\text{MCP0}}^2 + \sigma_{\text{MCP1}}^2 \end{cases}$$

MCP0: $\sigma_t = (3.6 \pm 1.5) \text{ ps}$

MCP1: $\sigma_t = (5.0 \pm 1.1) \text{ ps}$

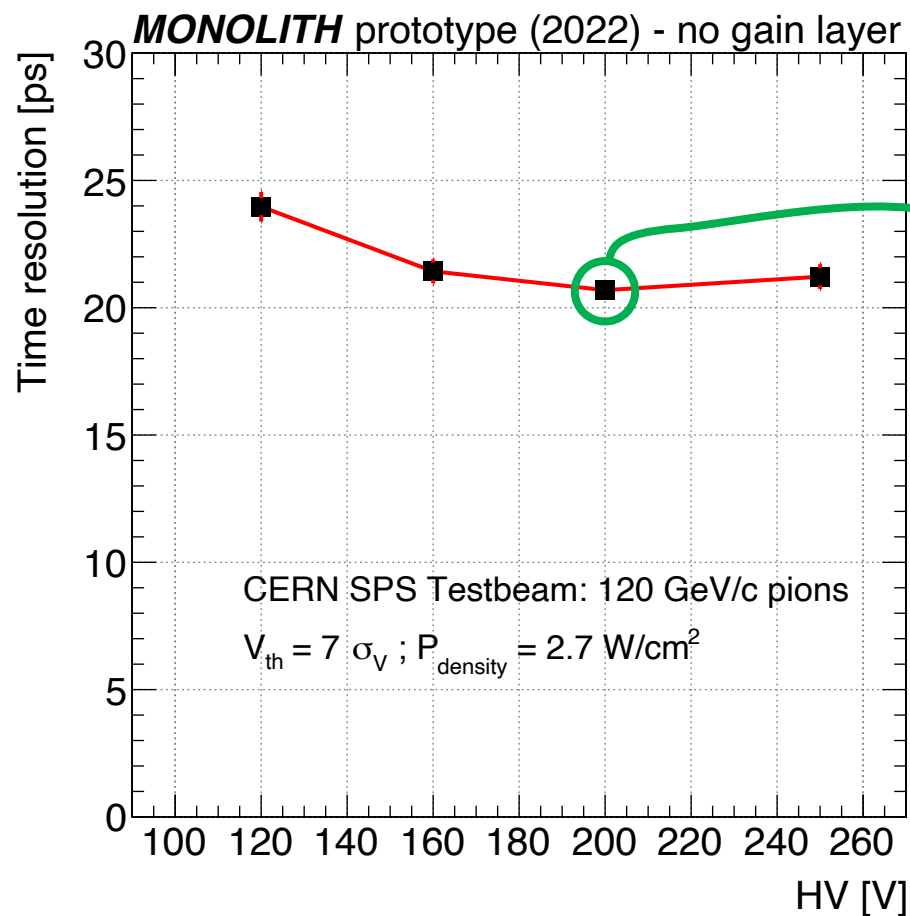
DUT: $\sigma_t = (20.1 \pm 0.3) \text{ ps}$

Time Resolution Results

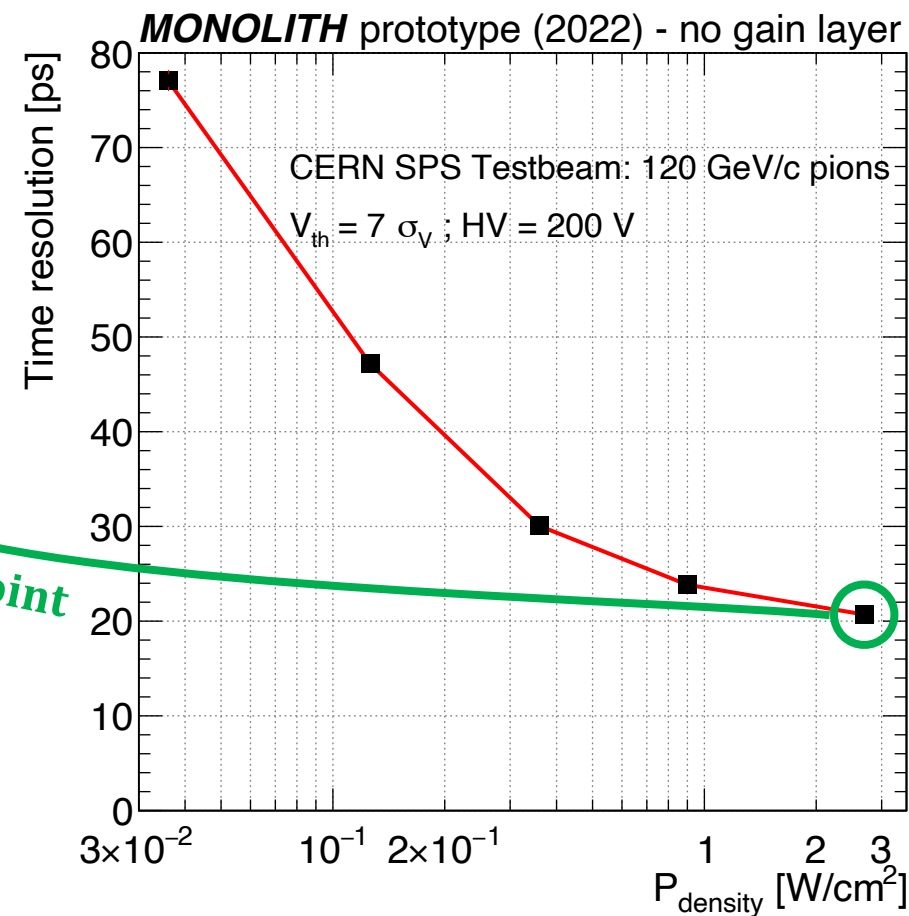


Large plateau of 100 V with **~20 ps**

Time Resolution Results



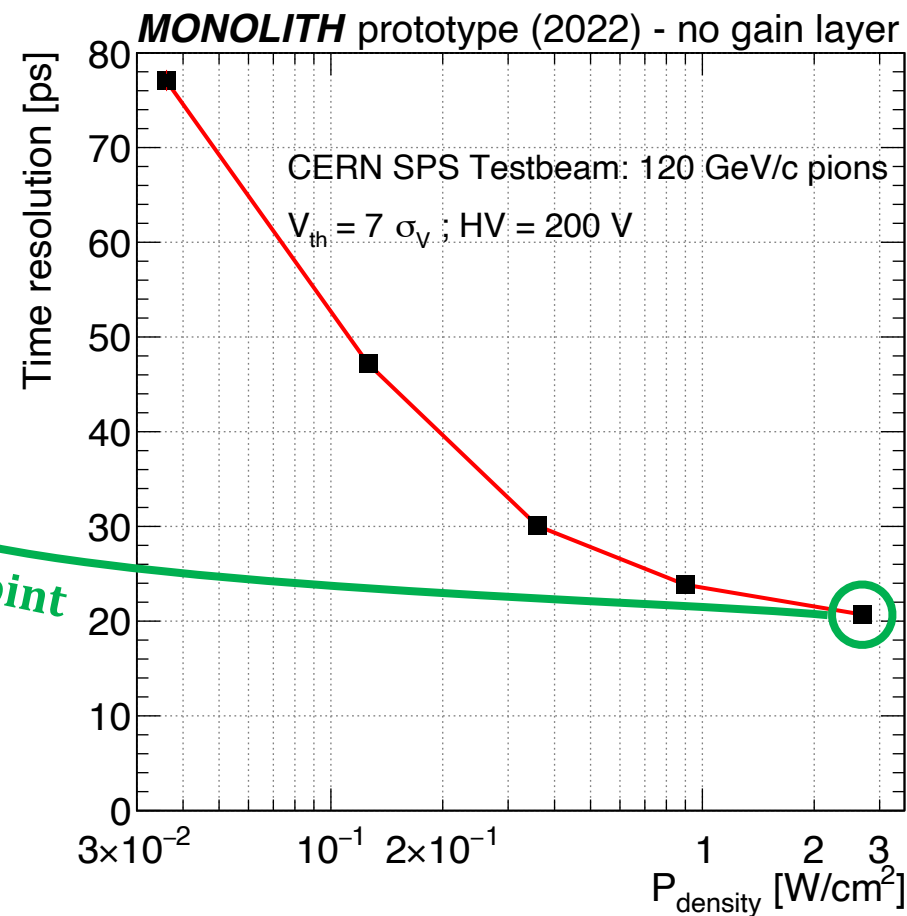
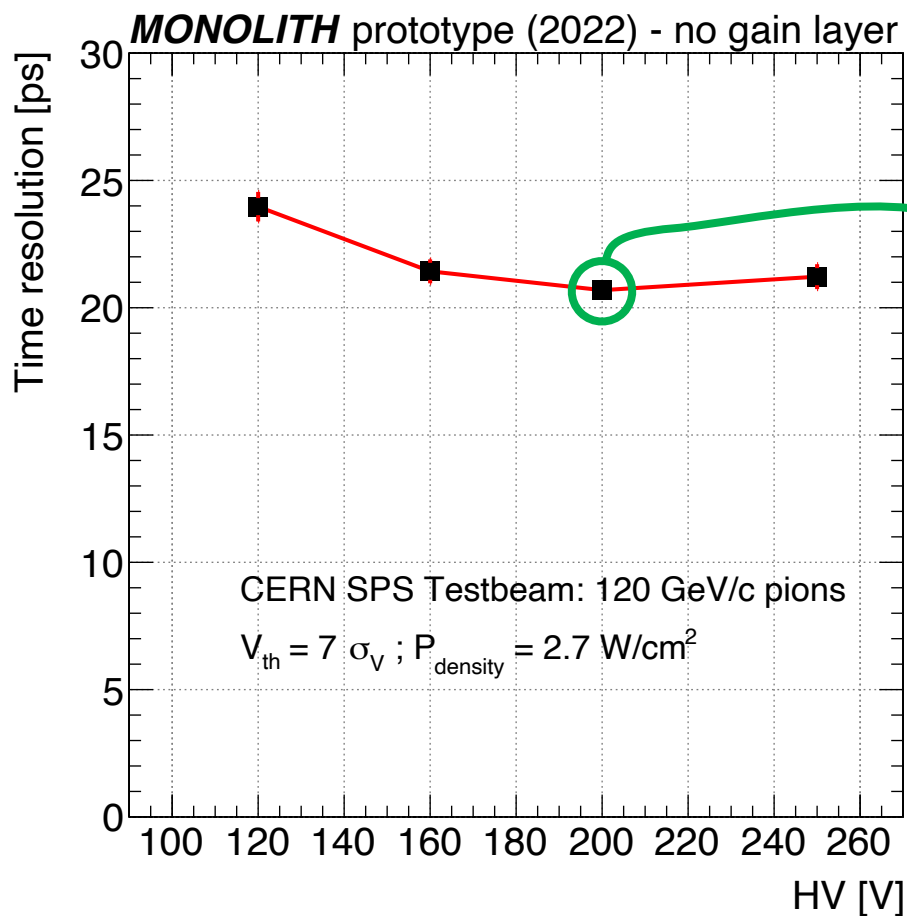
Large plateau of 100 V with ~**20 ps**



20 ps at 2.7 W/cm²
50 ps at 0.1 W/cm²

Same point

Time Resolution Results



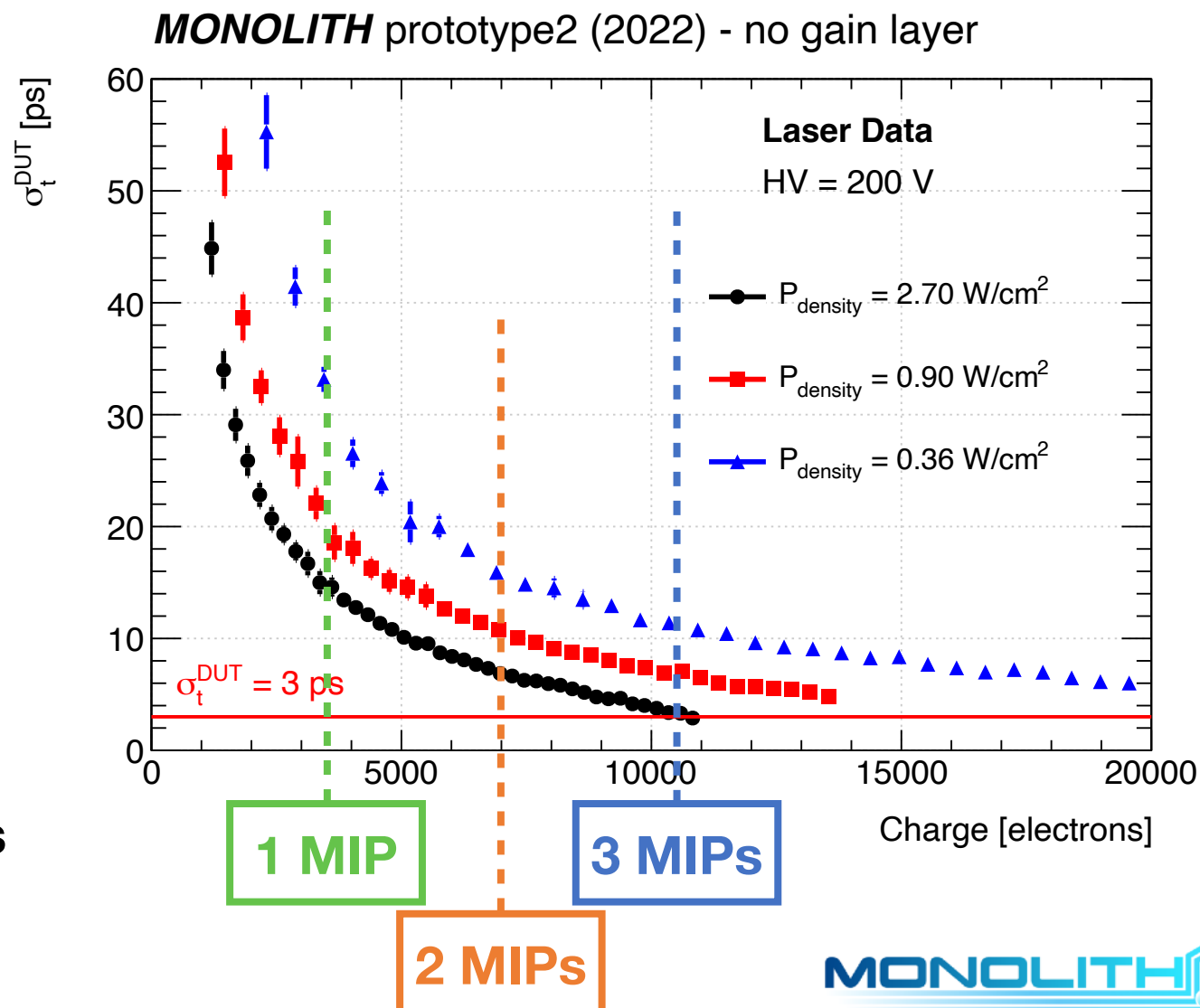
Same point

What happens if we increase the
generated charge?

Laser Measurements

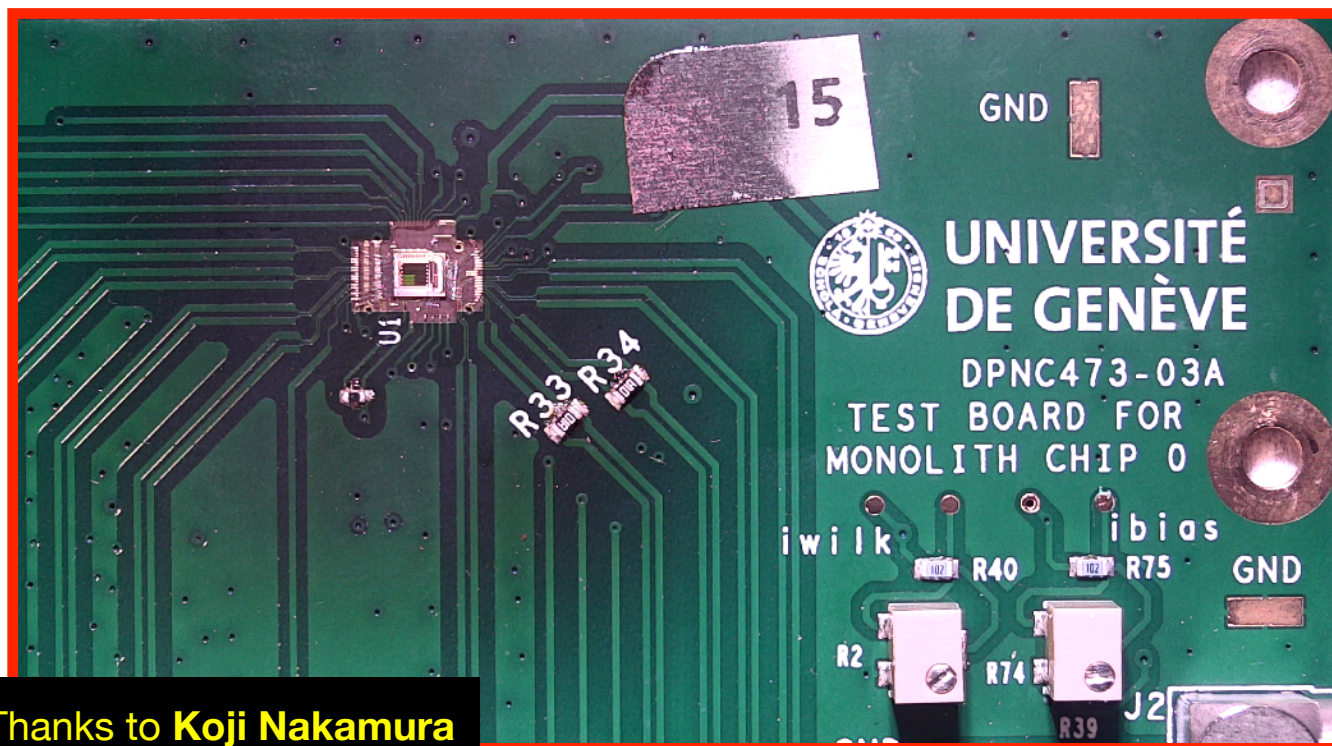
- A **M**inimum **I**onizing **P**article produces around 3500 electrons (0.5 fC) in the 50 μm -thick active area
- At a power density of 2.7 W/cm²:
 - The **time resolution** for the equivalent charge of **1 MIP** is **~15 ps**
- With the laser, the only contribution to the time resolution is the **electronics time jitter**:

$$\sigma_{\text{Jitter}} = \frac{\sigma_V}{\frac{dV}{dt}} \propto \frac{1}{\text{charge}}$$
- With charges higher than **3 MIPs** (1.5 fC, or 38 keV), the time jitter is **less than 3 ps**



Radiation Hardness

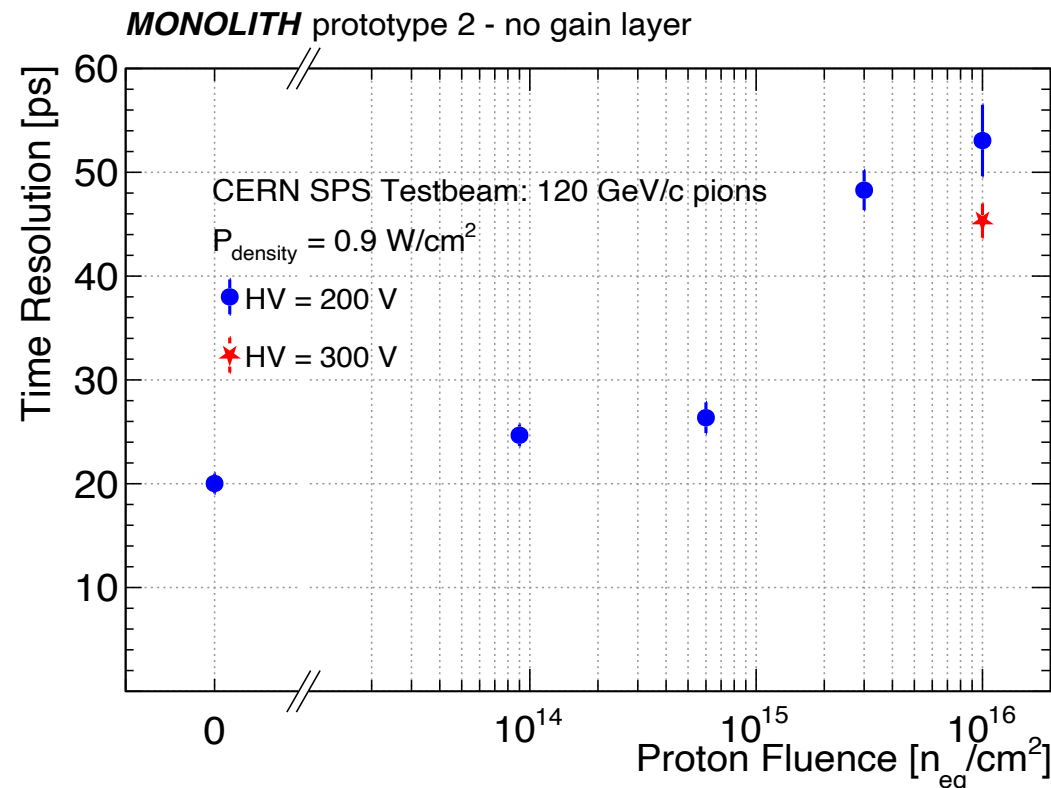
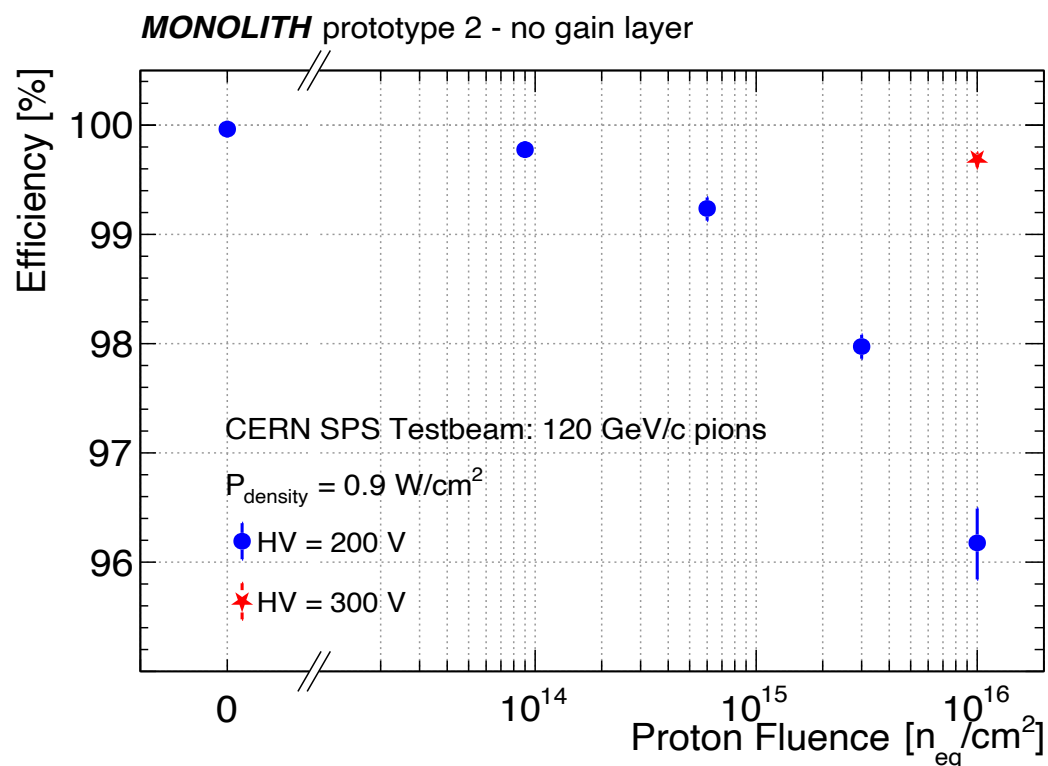
- Assess the **performance** of efficiency and time resolution **after proton irradiation**
- 8 prototypes **irradiated** in Japan up to $1 \times 10^{16} \text{ n}_{\text{eq}}/\text{cm}^2$



Thanks to **Koji Nakamura**
and **Manabu Togawa**

Board Name	Fluence [$1 \text{ MeV n}_{\text{eq}}/\text{cm}^2$]
M23	$2 \cdot 10^{13}$
M22	$9 \cdot 10^{13}$
M21	$6 \cdot 10^{14}$
M19	$6 \cdot 10^{14}$
M18	$3 \cdot 10^{15}$
M17	$3 \cdot 10^{15}$
M16	$1 \cdot 10^{16}$
M15	$1 \cdot 10^{16}$

Efficiency and Time Resolution After Irradiation

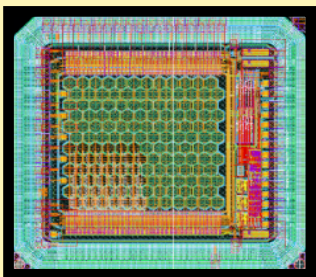


At $10^{16} n_{\text{eq}}/\text{cm}^2$, with **HV = 200 V** and $P_{\text{density}} = 0.9 \text{ W/cm}^2$:

- The **efficiency** is 96.2% -> **99.7%** increasing the High Voltage
- The **time resolution** is 53 ps -> **45 ps** increasing the High Voltage

Prototypes With PicoAD[©]

2020

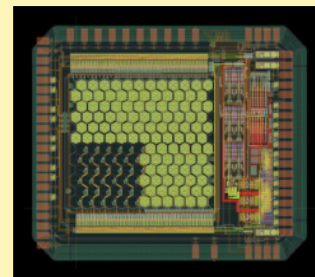


- Hexagonal pixels 65 μm
- 30 ps TDC + I/O logic
- 4 analog outputs

36 ps

[JINST 17 P02019](#)

2022



- Hexagonal pixels 65 μm
- Improved frontend
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20 ps

[JINST 18 P03047](#) [JINST 19 P01014](#)
[JINST 19 P04029](#) [JINST 19 P07036](#)

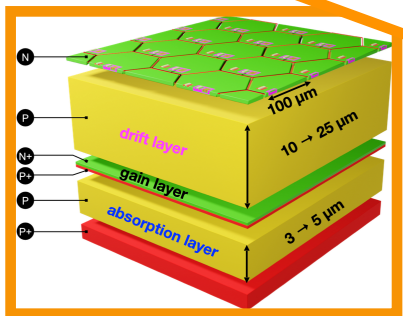
In this
presentation

2022

With PicoAD[©]

17 ps

[JINST 17 P10032](#)
[JINST 17 P10040](#)



With PicoAD[©]

With PicoAD[©]

In this

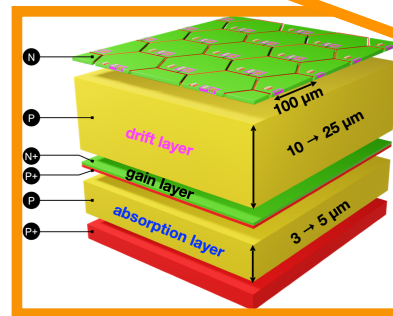
presentation

2024

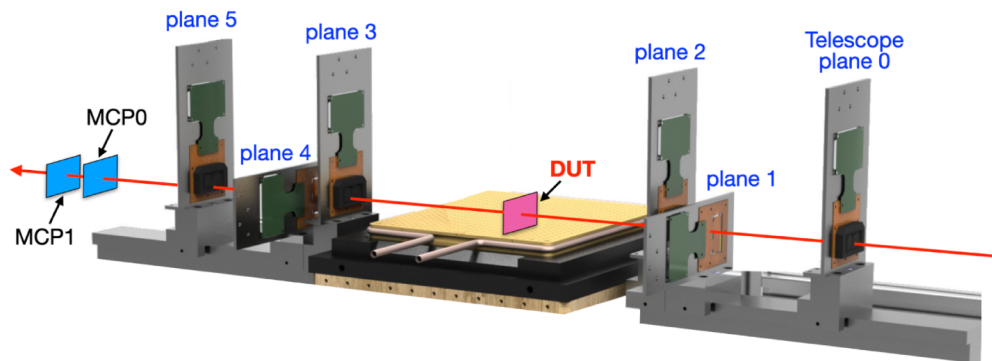
With PicoAD[©]

12 ps

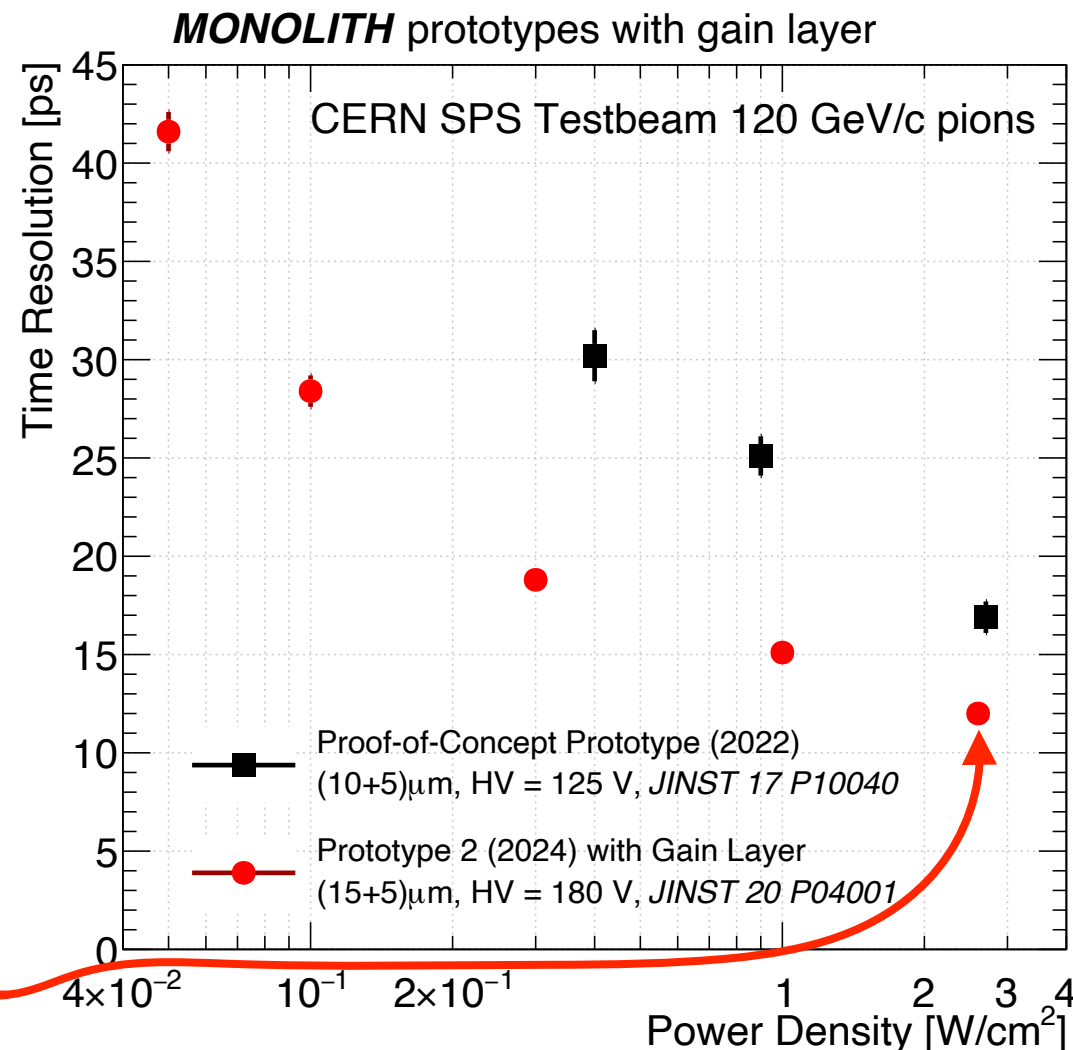
[JINST 20 P04001](#)



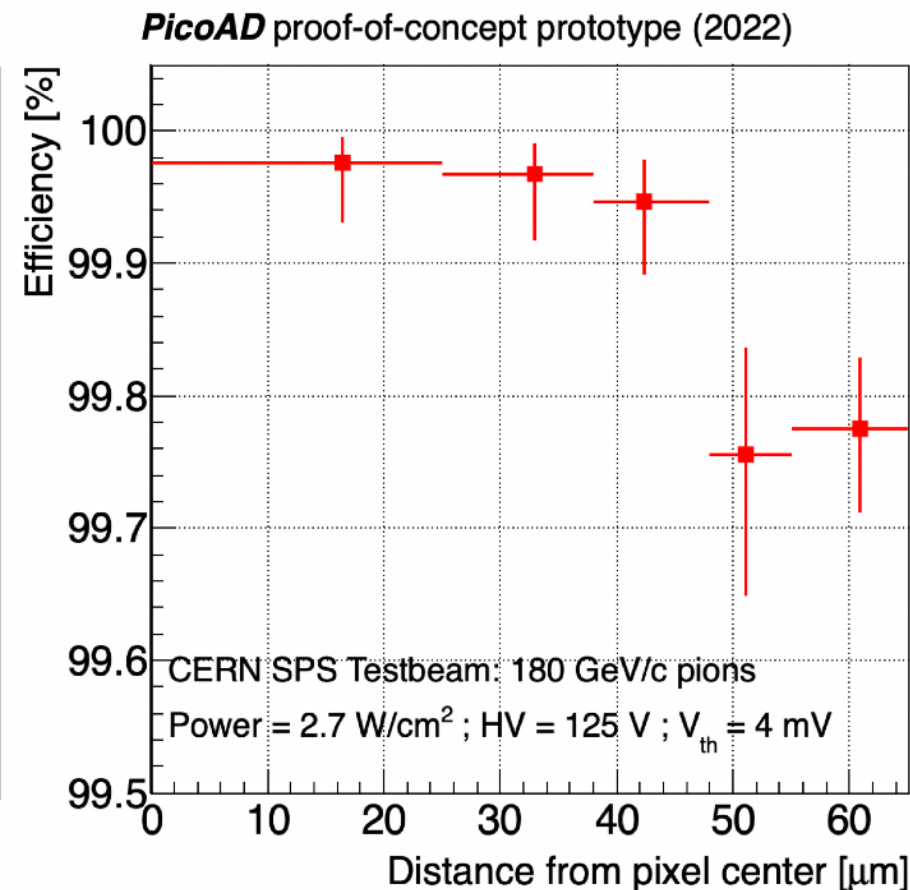
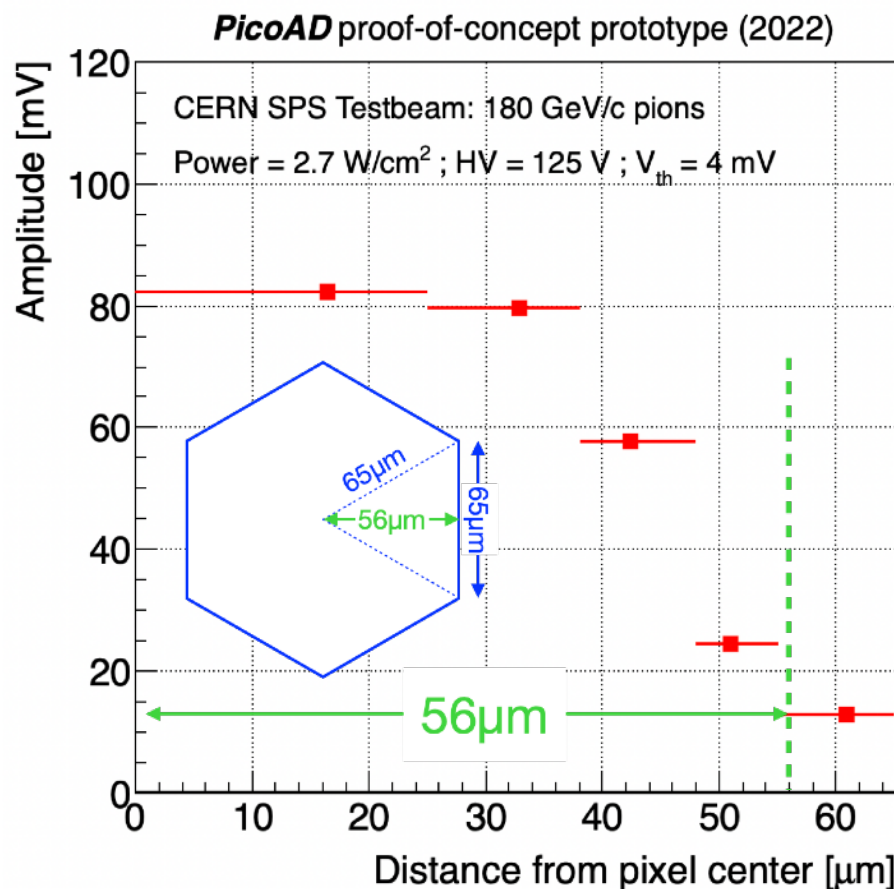
Testbeam Results



- Testbeam measurements with FE-I4 telescope
 - **PicoAD[®]** proof-of-concept in **October 2021**
 - Second prototype with gain layer in **May 2024**
- The **efficiency** is **compatible with 99.9%** for many working points
- The **time resolution improved** by almost a factor of two:
 - **The best performance with the second prototype is 12.1 ps** with HV of 180 V and P_{density} of **2.6 W/cm²**



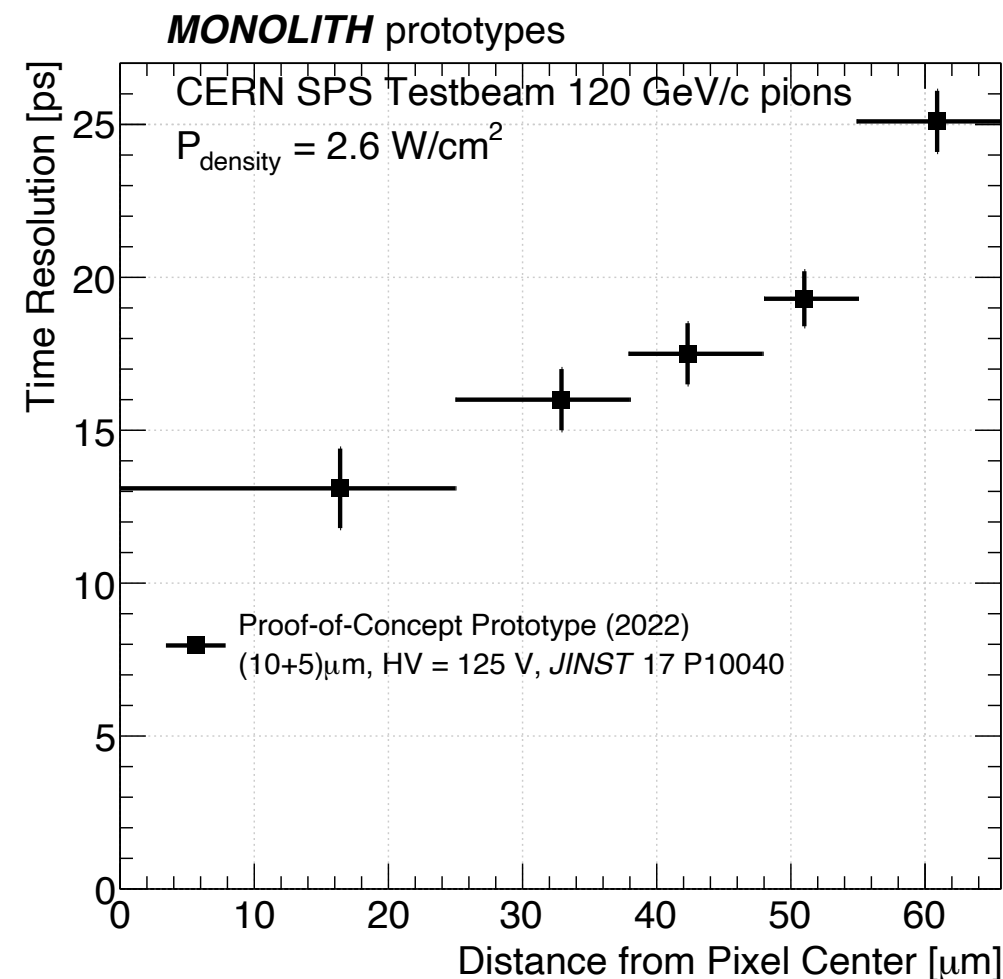
Performance Within the Pixel



- We saw a slight degradation of the performance towards the pixel's edge with the **PicoAD**® proof-of-concept:
 - **Lower amplitudes and lower efficiencies**

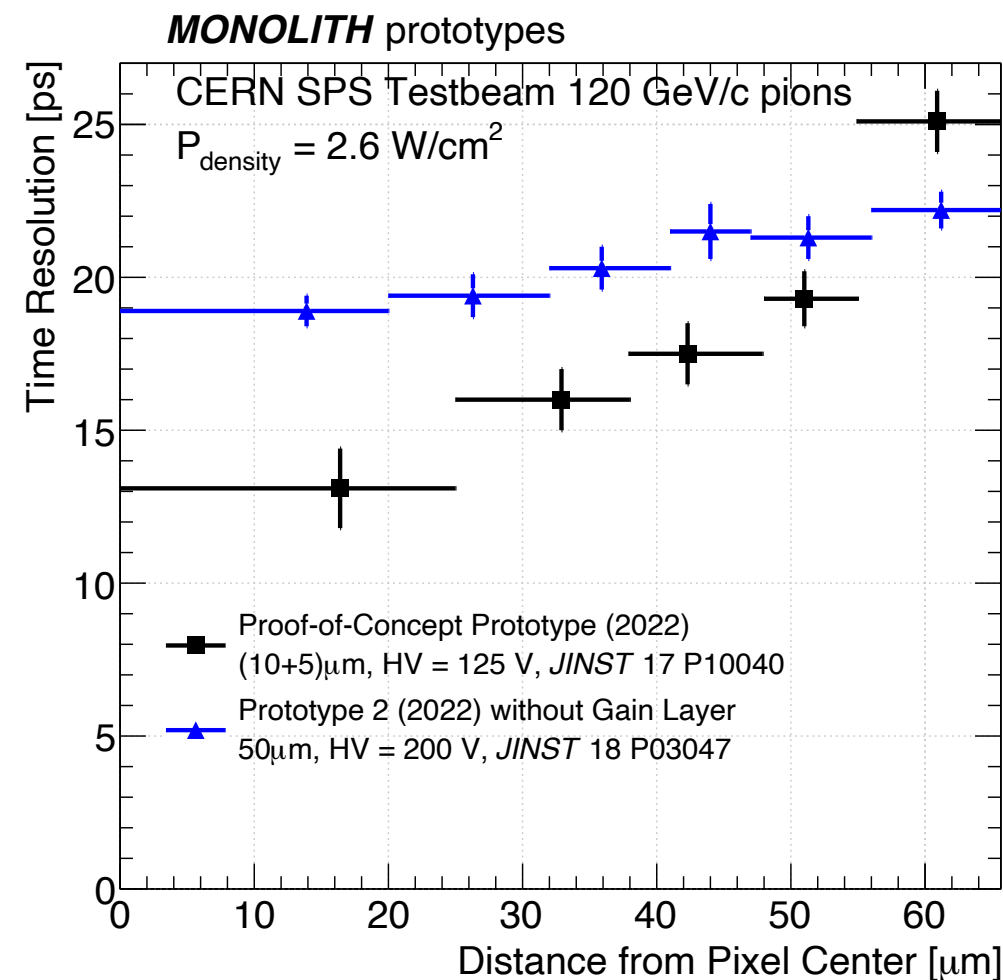
Time Resolution Within the Pixel

- The degradation of the amplitudes leads to a **degradation of the time resolution**:
 - The **time resolution** of the **PicoAD[®]** proof-of-concept varies between **13 and 25 ps** (almost a factor 2 worse), with an average of 17 ps



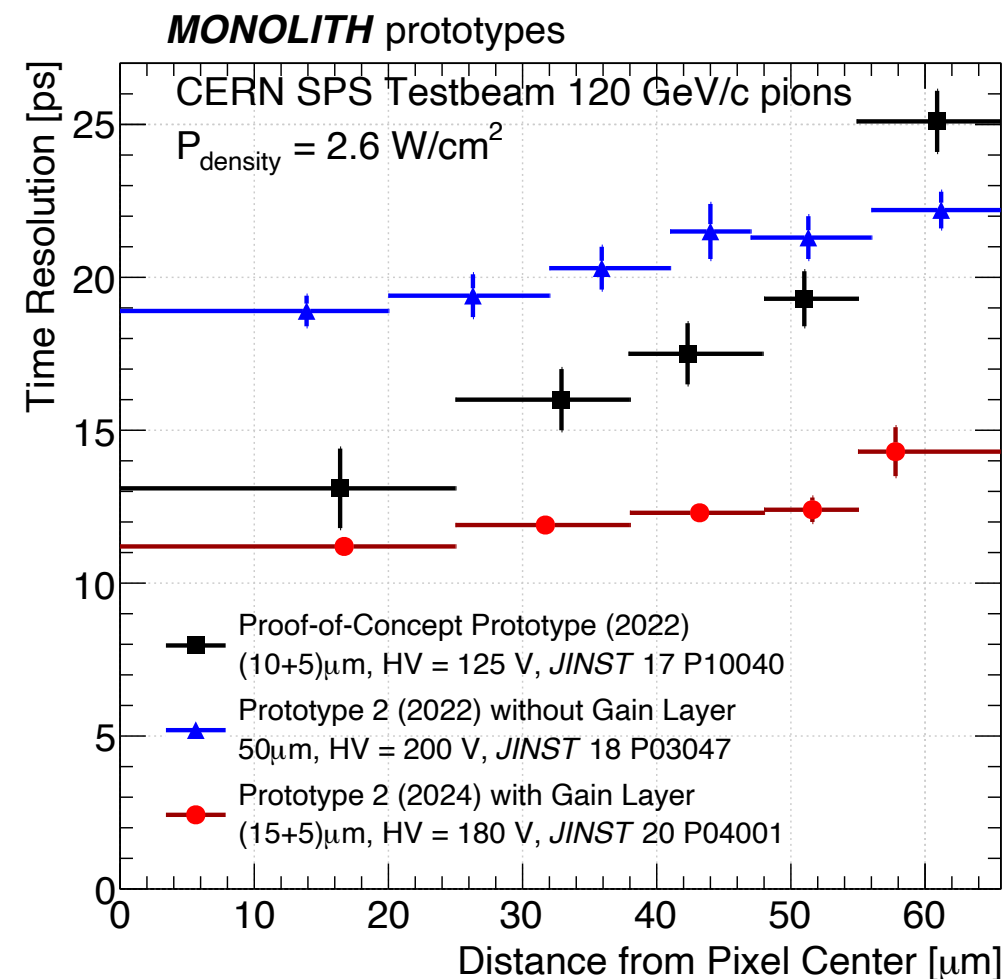
Time Resolution Within the Pixel

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 - The **time resolution** of the **PicoAD[®]** proof-of-concept varies between **13 and 25 ps** (almost a factor 2 worse), with an average of 17 ps
- Some **improvements** on the ASIC and the substrate make the situation more stable:
 - The **time resolution** of the second prototype **without a gain layer** varies between **19 and 24 ps**



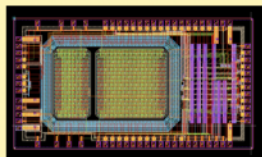
Time Resolution Within the Pixel

- The degradation of the amplitudes leads to a **degradation of the time resolution**:
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- Some **improvements** on the ASIC and the substrate make the situation more stable:
 - The **time resolution** of the second prototype **without a gain layer** varies between **19 and 24 ps**
 - The **time resolution** of the second prototype **with a gain layer** varies between **11 and 14 ps**



Summary

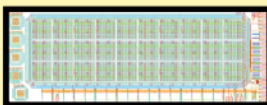
2016



- Square pixel 900 μm
- Discriminated output

200 ps

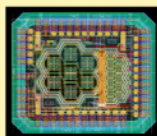
2017



- Square pixels 500 μm
- 100 ps TDC + I/O logic

110 ps

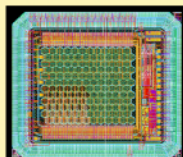
2018



- Hexagonal pixels 130 μm
- Discriminated outputs

45 ps

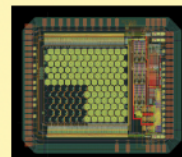
2020



- Hexagonal pixels 65 μm
- 30 ps TDC + I/O logic
- 4 analog outputs

36 ps

2022



- Hexagonal pixels 65 μm
- Improved frontend
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20 ps

- **20 ps** time resolution with a MIP
- **Laser** measurements:
 - **3 ps** with the equivalent charge of 3 MIPs
- After irradiation at **$10^{16} \text{ n}_{\text{eq}}/\text{cm}^2$** :
 - **99.7%** efficiency
 - **45 ps** time resolution

2024

With **PicoAD[©]**

12 ps

2022

With **PicoAD[©]**

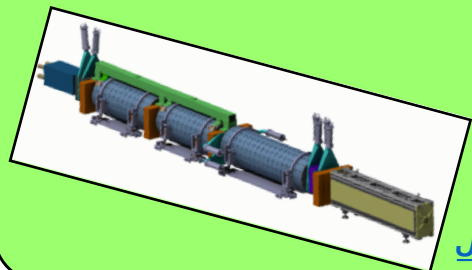
17 ps

12 ps time resolution
with a MIP

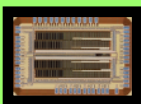
17 ps time resolution
with a MIP

Other Projects at UNIGE

LHC Application: Preshower for FASER -> [webpage](#)



2022

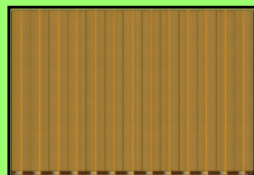


[JINST 16 P12038](#)

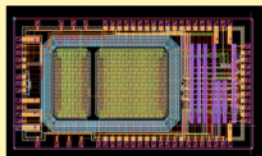
2023



2024



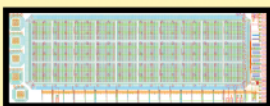
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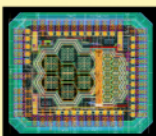
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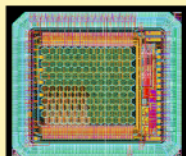
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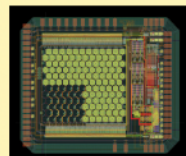
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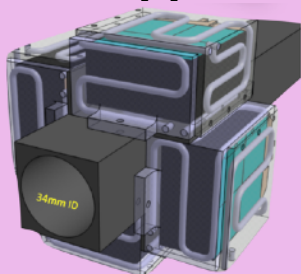


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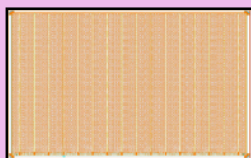
20 ps

Medical Application: 100 μPET

[NIMA 167952](#)



2024



2022

With **PicoAD[©]**
17 ps

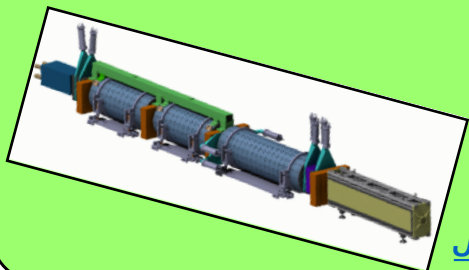
2024

With **PicoAD[©]**
12 ps

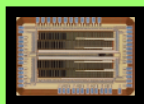
See Roberto
Cardella's talk

Future Perspectives

LHC Application: Preshower for FASER -> [webpage](#)



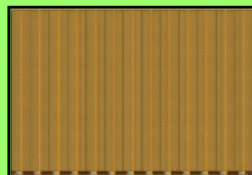
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2023



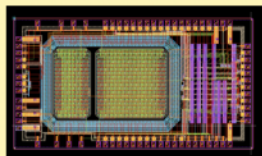
2024



[JINST 16 P12038](#)

High-radiation level
timing layers for
particle physics

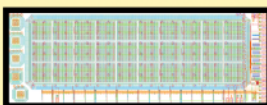
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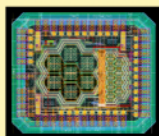
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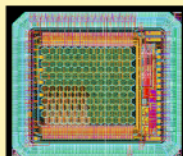
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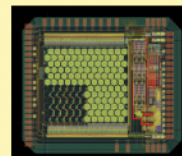
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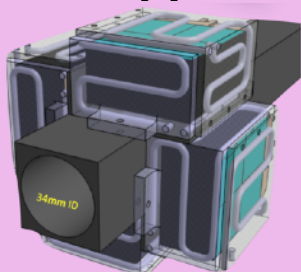
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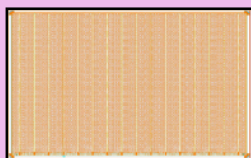
Moderate radiation
level, extremely
thin timing layers
for particle physics

Medical Application: 100 μ PET

[NIMA 167952](#)



2024



2022

With **PicoAD[©]**
17 ps

2024

With **PicoAD[©]**
12 ps

Photonics

People Involved



Giuseppe Iacobucci

- Project P.I.
- System Design



Thanushan Kugathasan

- Lead Chip Design
- Analog Electronics



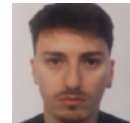
Roberto Cardella

- Analog and Digital Electronics
- Sensor Design



Leonardo Cecconi

- Chip Design
- Firmware



Luca Iodice

- Chip Design
- Firmware



Carlo Alberto Fenoglio

- Chip Design
- Firmware



Andrea Pizarro Medina

- Laboratory Tests
- Data Analysis



Lorenzo Paolozzi

- Sensor Design
- Analog Electronics



Stefano Zambito

- Laboratory Tests
- Data Analysis



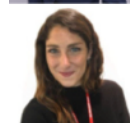
Mateus Vicente

- System Integration
- Laboratory Tests



Viros Sriskaran

- Analog Electronics
- Digital Electronics



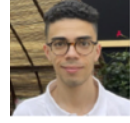
Chiara Magliocca

- Laboratory Tests
- Data Analysis



Théo Moretti

- Laboratory Tests
- Data Analysis



Jihad Saidi

- Laboratory Tests
- Data Analysis



Didier Ferrere

- System integration
- Laboratory test



Yannick Favre

- Board design
- RO system



Sergio Gonzalez-Sevilla

- System integration
- Laboratory test



Stéphane Débieux

- Board design
- RO system

Main research partners:



Roberto Cardarelli
INFN Rome2 & UNIGE



Holger Rücker
IHP Mikroelektronik



Marzio Nessi
CERN & UNIGE



Matteo Elviretti
IHP Mikroelektronik

Thanks for Your Attention

Questions?

- Previously involved:
 - Magdalena Munker
 - Jordi Sabater Iglesias

- Antonio Picardi
- Ivan Semendyaev
- Rafaella Kotitsa

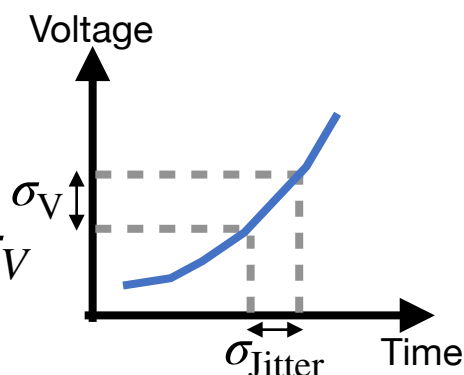
The MONOLITH ERC Project

- A precise measure of time ($\sigma_t \sim 30$ ps) is achieved by reducing the two **main contributions** to the time resolution:

- The **electronics time jitter**:

$$\sigma_{\text{Jitter}} = \frac{\sigma_V}{dV/dt}$$

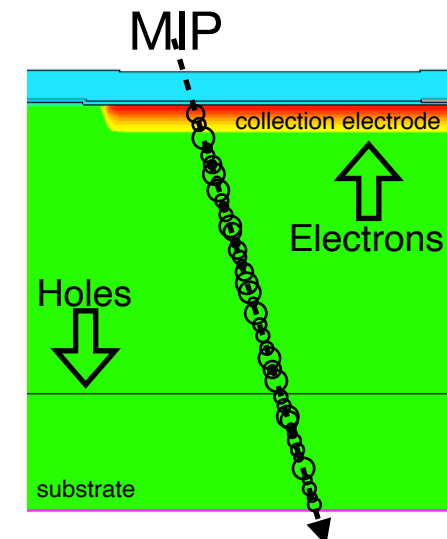
- Related to the signal rise time dV/dt and the noise σ_V
- We want **fast and low-noise amplification**



- The **charge-collection noise**:

$$\sigma_{\text{Landau}} = w(d) \sigma_{\tau, \text{SC}} \propto \frac{d}{\sqrt{\ln(d)}}$$

- Related to the detector thickness d
- We want a **small detector thickness**



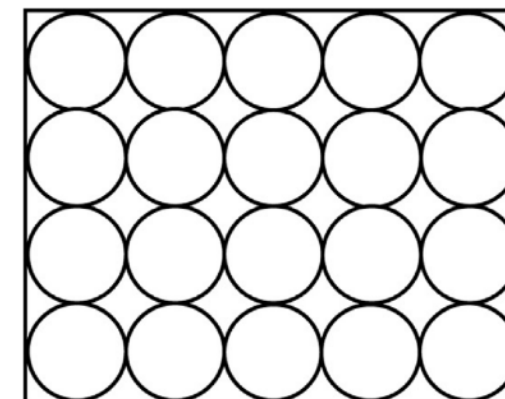
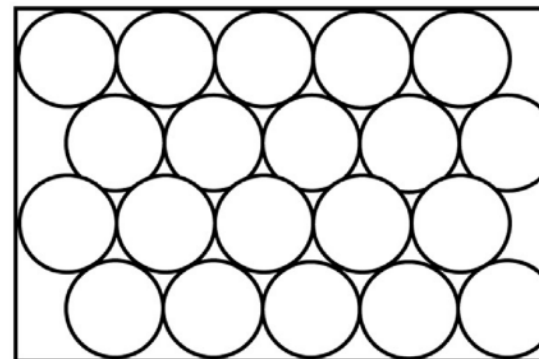
**SiGe
Technology**

**Monolithic
BiCMOS
Process**

**PicoAD[®]:
Picosecond
Avalanche
Detector**

Hexagonal Pixels

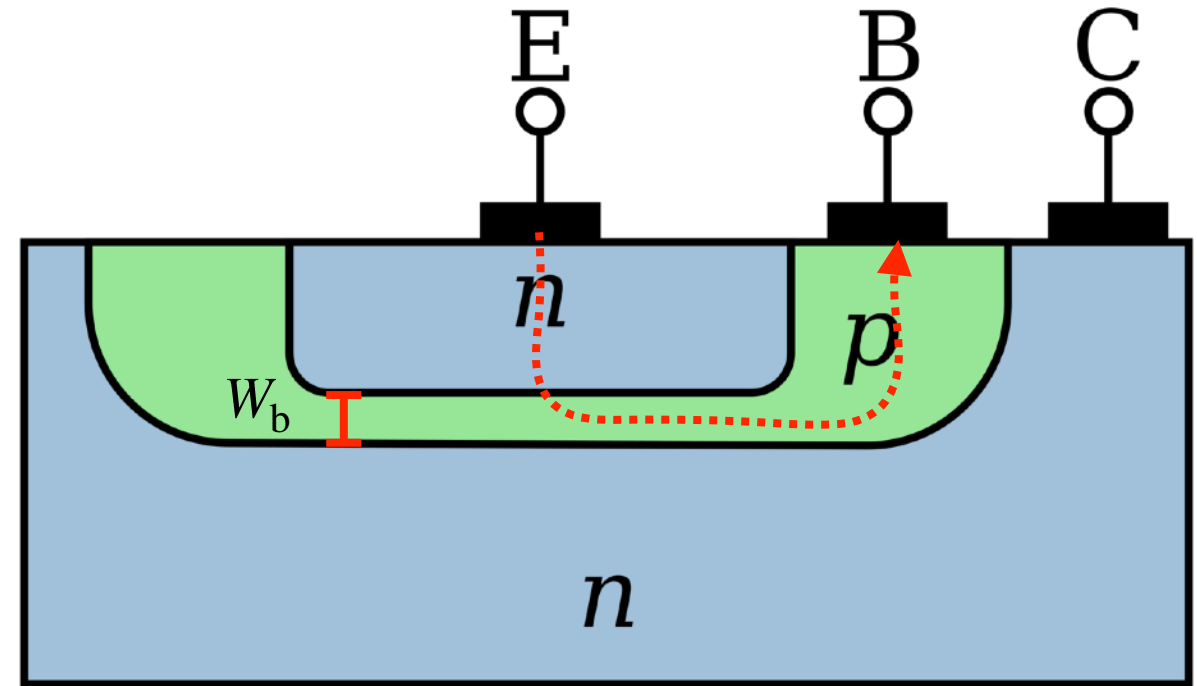
- Three possible regular shapes to use:
 - equilateral triangles
 - squares
 - regular hexagons
- Hexagons have the highest angles (120°)
 - **electric fields** in the corners are better **under control**
- Moreover, the same amount of pixels can fit in less space than squares



Thick Base = Small Base Resistance

- When a grading of Ge is added to the base of a BJT, it is possible to make the base thicker
- A thicker base thickness W_b means a **smaller base resistance** R_b than a BJT
- The electrons coming from the emitter to the base see the **base thickness** W_b as the **transversal dimension**:

$$R_b \propto \frac{\rho_b l_b}{W_b}$$

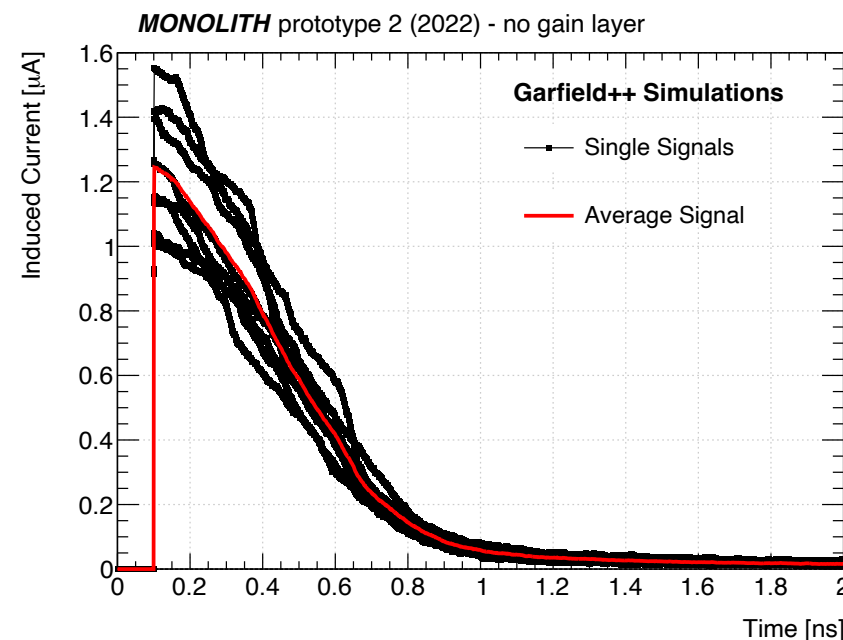
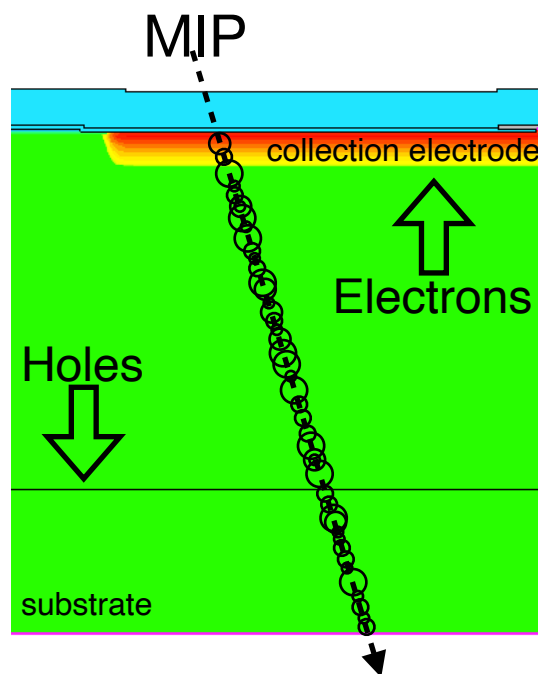
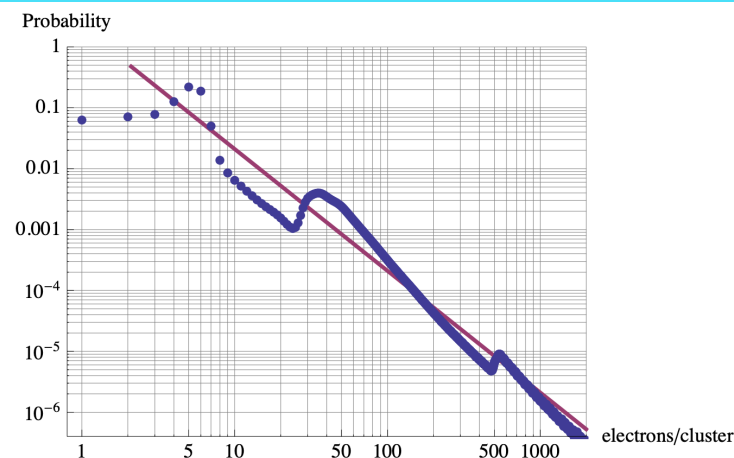


Charge-Collection Noise in Detail

- The charge generated by a **Minimum Ionizing Particle** follows a pattern of clusters with different charges
- The **probability** of electrons for each cluster is known
- Electrons and holes** drift thanks to the electric field and **induce a current**:

$$i_{ind} = -q \vec{v}_{drift} \cdot \vec{E}_{weight}$$

- A **cluster** stops inducing current when it's **collected**, creating noise on the induced current signal
- The contribution of this noise to the time resolution is called **charge-collection noise** (or Landau noise)



Charge-Collection Noise in Detail

- The **shape of the induced current** for a single cluster with a charge Q depends on the depth x of creation:

$$i_{SC}(x, t) = \frac{Q v_e}{d} \Theta\left(\frac{x}{v_e} - t\right) + \frac{Q v_h}{d} \Theta\left(\frac{d-x}{v_h} - t\right)$$

- And so it does the **center-of-gravity time**:

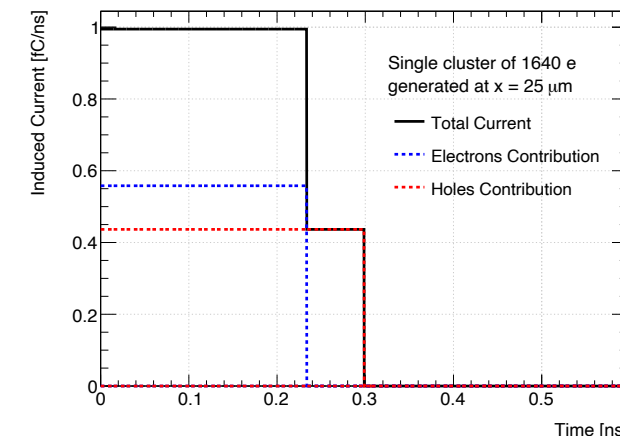
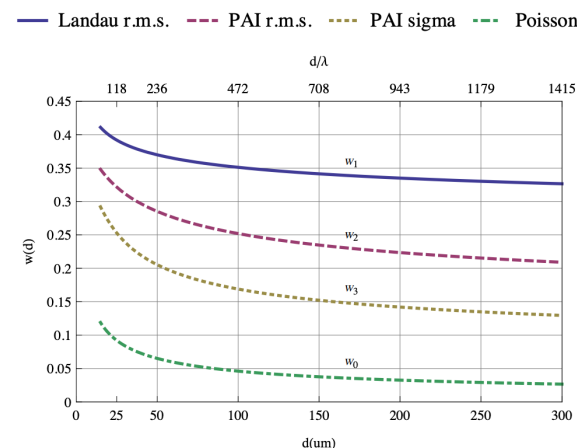
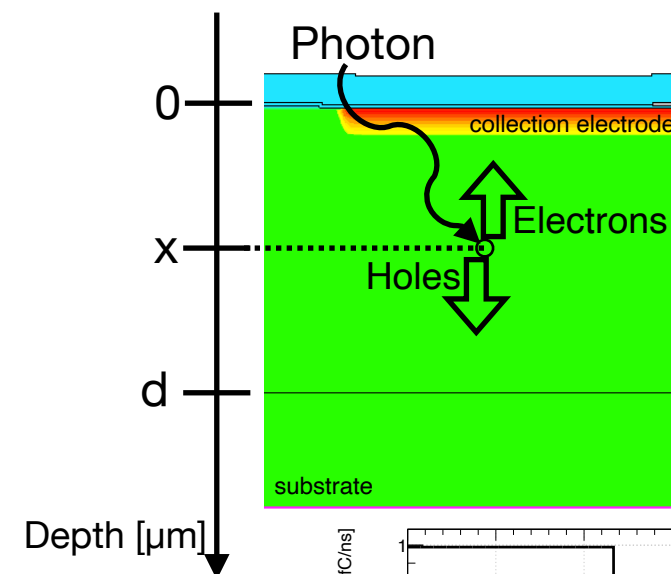
$$\tau = \frac{\int_0^\infty t i_{SC}(x, t) dt}{\int_0^\infty i_{SC}(x, t) dt} = \frac{1}{2d} \left[\frac{x^2}{v_e} + \frac{(d-x)^2}{v_h} \right]$$

- With its **variance**:

$$\sigma_{\tau, SC}^2 = \frac{4}{180} \frac{d^2}{v_e} - \frac{7}{180} \frac{d^2}{v_e v_h} + \frac{4}{180} \frac{d^2}{v_h}$$

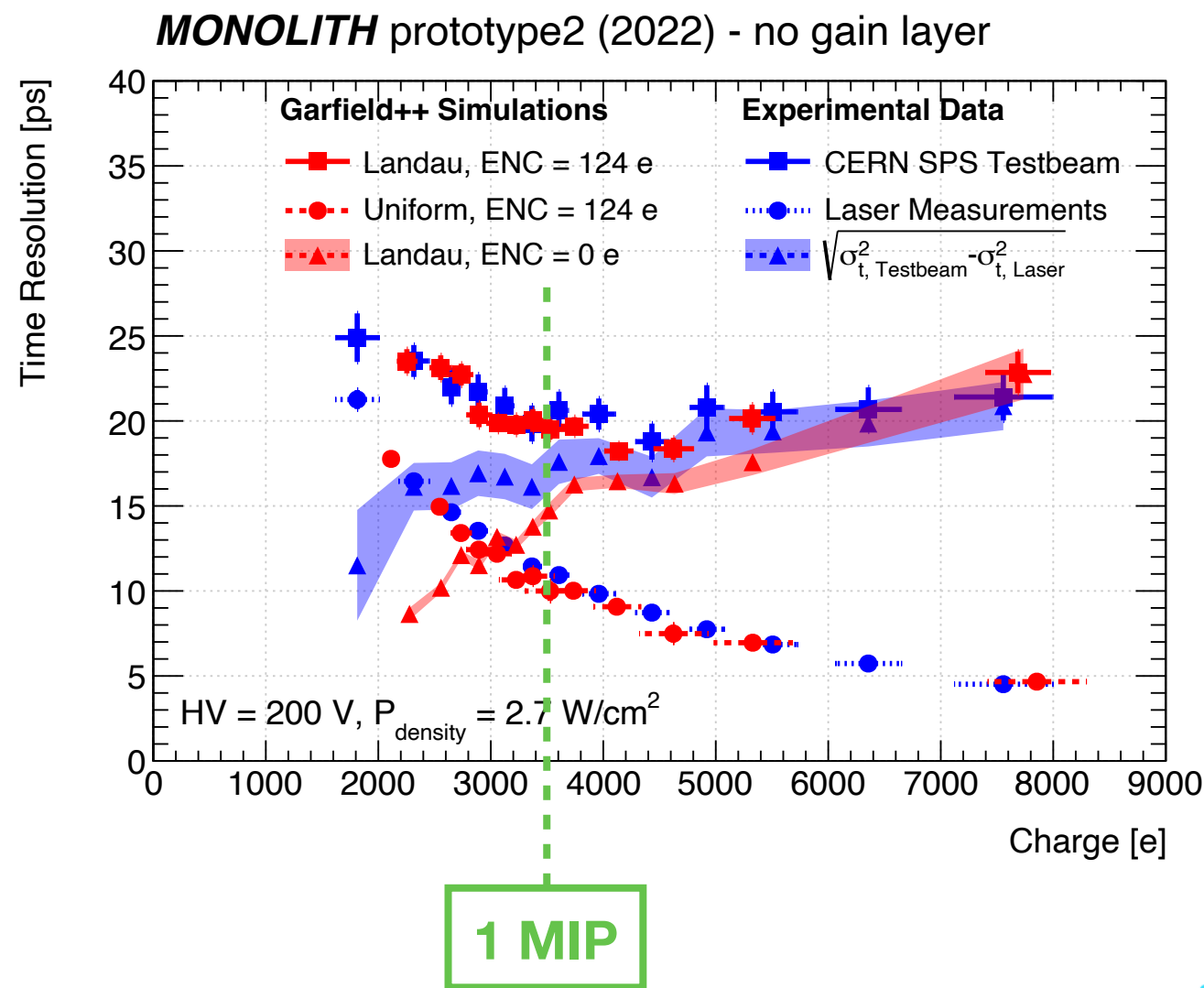
- For a **MIP with many clusters**, and when the amplifier is slow, the charge-collection noise contribution to the time resolution is:

$$\sigma_{Landau} = \sigma_{\tau, MIP} = w(d) \sigma_{\tau, SC} \propto \frac{d}{\sqrt{\ln(d)}}$$

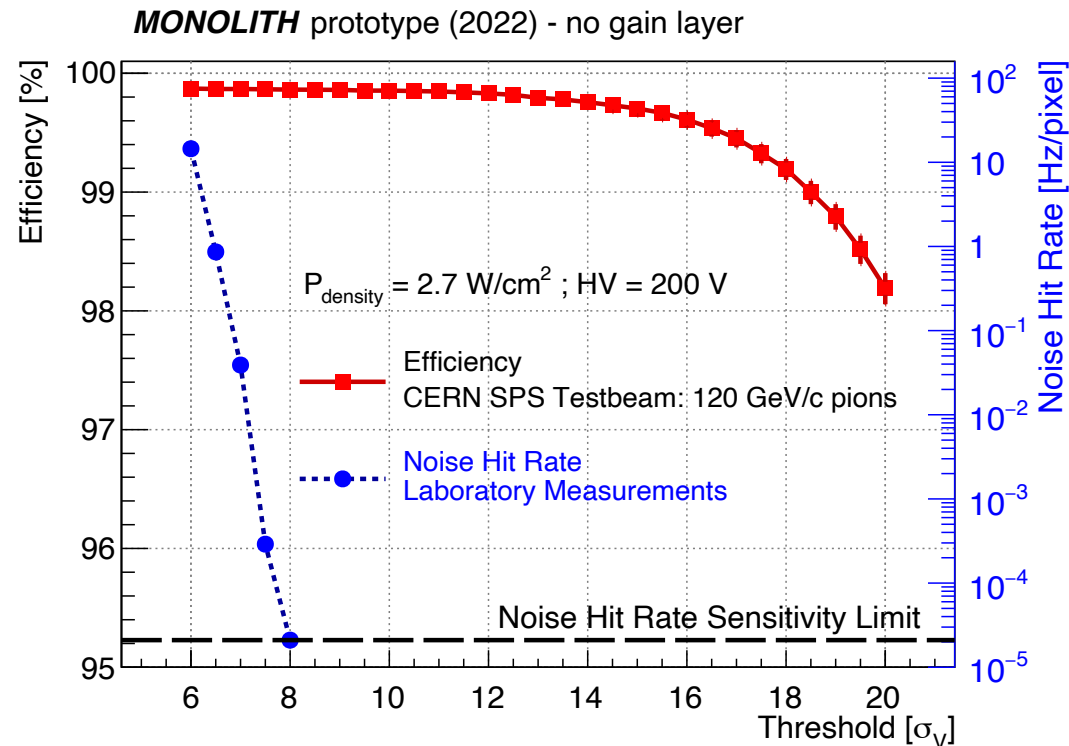
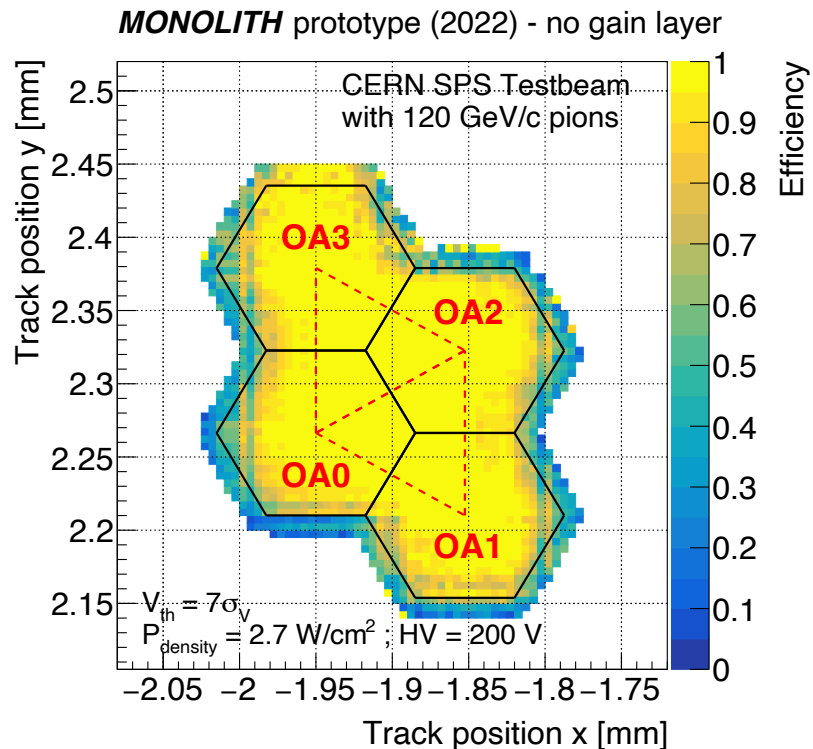


Charge-Collection Noise

- **Garfield++** simulation using:
 - The measured **E**quivalent **N**oise **C**harge
 - The **e**lectric **f**ield (TCAD)
 - The **e**lectronics **δ** -response (Cadence)
- The **MIP** simulation matches the **testbeam data** ($\sigma_{\text{Jitter}} \oplus \sigma_{\text{Landau}}$)
- The charge deposition created by the **laser** is **uniform** (no σ_{Landau})
- The **simulation** matches the **laser data**
- The **difference in quadrature** between the testbeam and laser should be the σ_{Landau} contribution
- The simulated **trend** is **similar** to the measured one
 - There are non-negligible correlations between σ_{Jitter} and σ_{Landau}



Efficiency Results

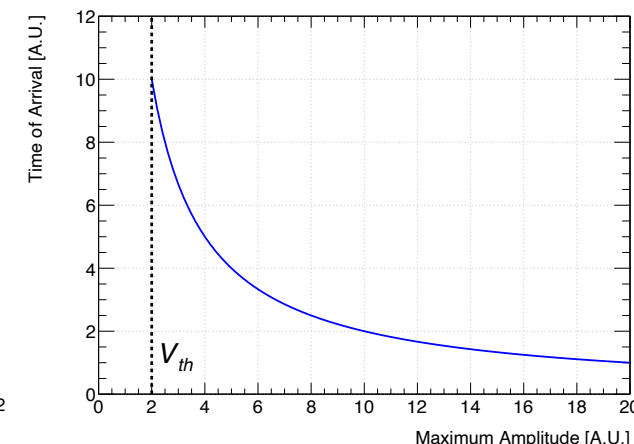
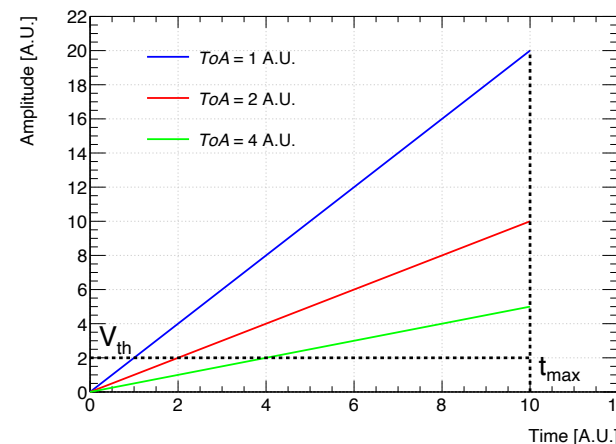


- The **apparent degradation** at the edges is due to the $\sim 10 \mu\text{m}$ resolution of the telescope
- Selection of two **triangles**:
 - representative of the whole pixel
 - **unbiased** by the telescope resolution

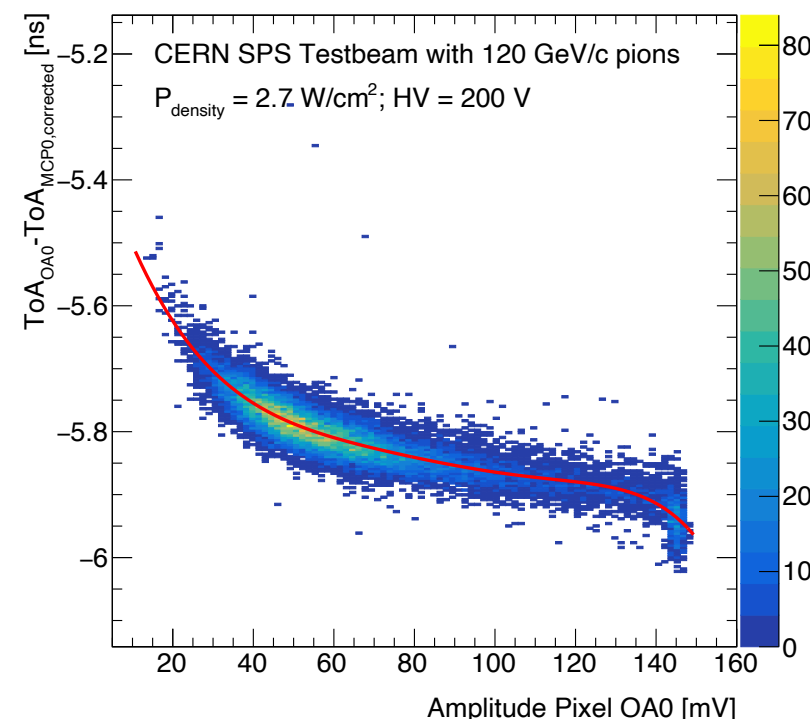
- Large plateau of **99.8% efficiency**
 - $\sigma_V \approx 1.4 \text{ mV} \approx 100 e^-$
- Negligible noise hit rate already at $7\sigma_V$

Time-Walk Correction

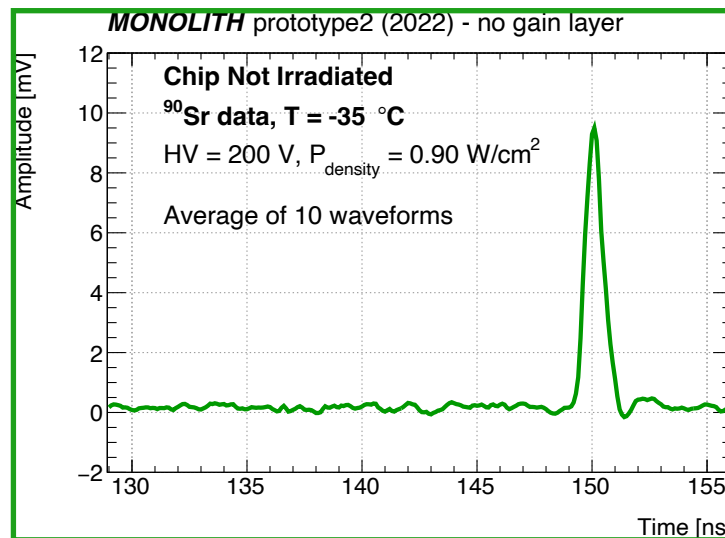
- The **time walk** is the spread in the time of arrival created by signals having different amplitudes
- In our prototypes, the time-walk **correction** is implemented in two possible ways:
 - Either taking the time of arrival as the time to reach a **fixed threshold**, and subtracting the average time of arrival for each amplitude
 - Either taking the time of arrival as the time to reach a **constant fraction** of the signal, which automatically corrects the time walk



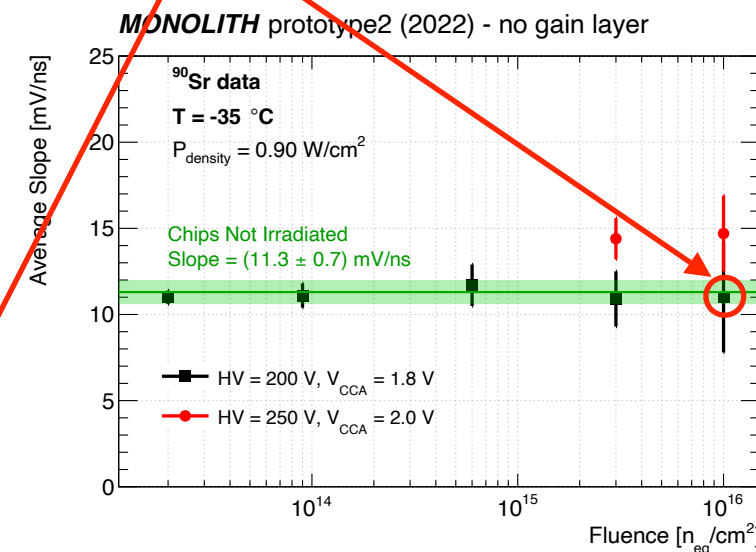
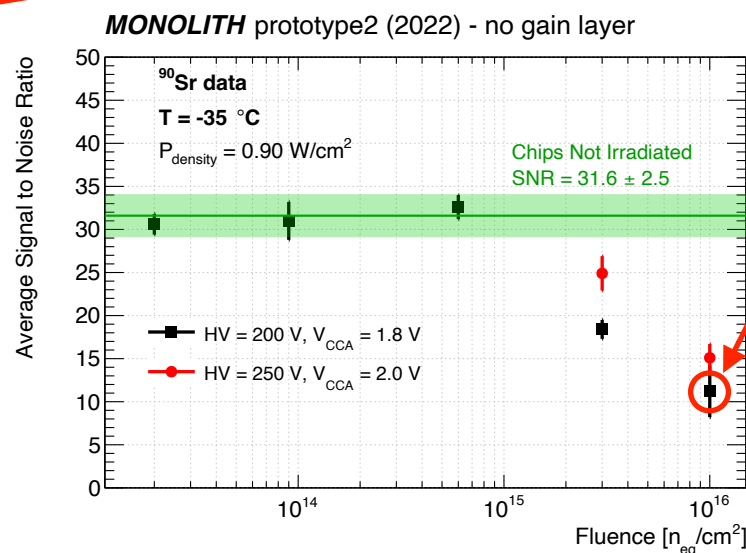
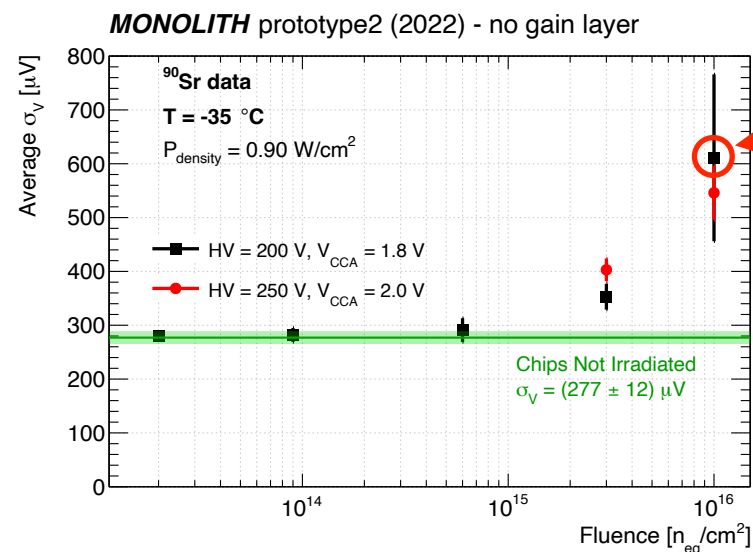
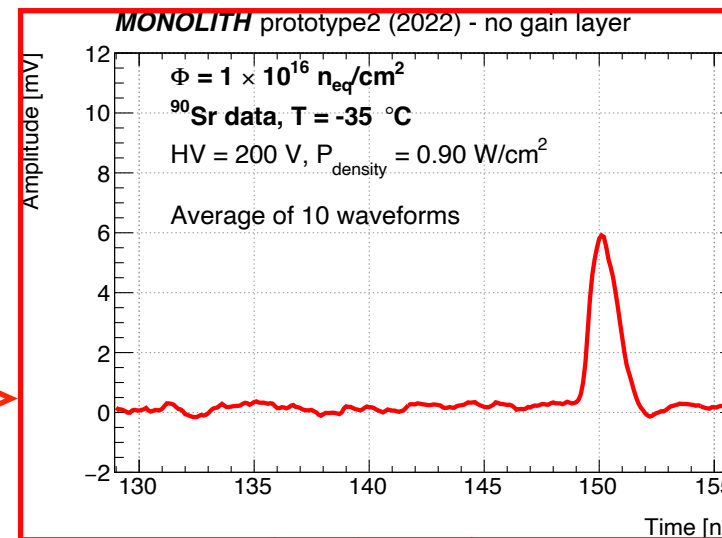
MONOLITH prototype (2022) - no gain layer



Main Characteristics After Irradiation

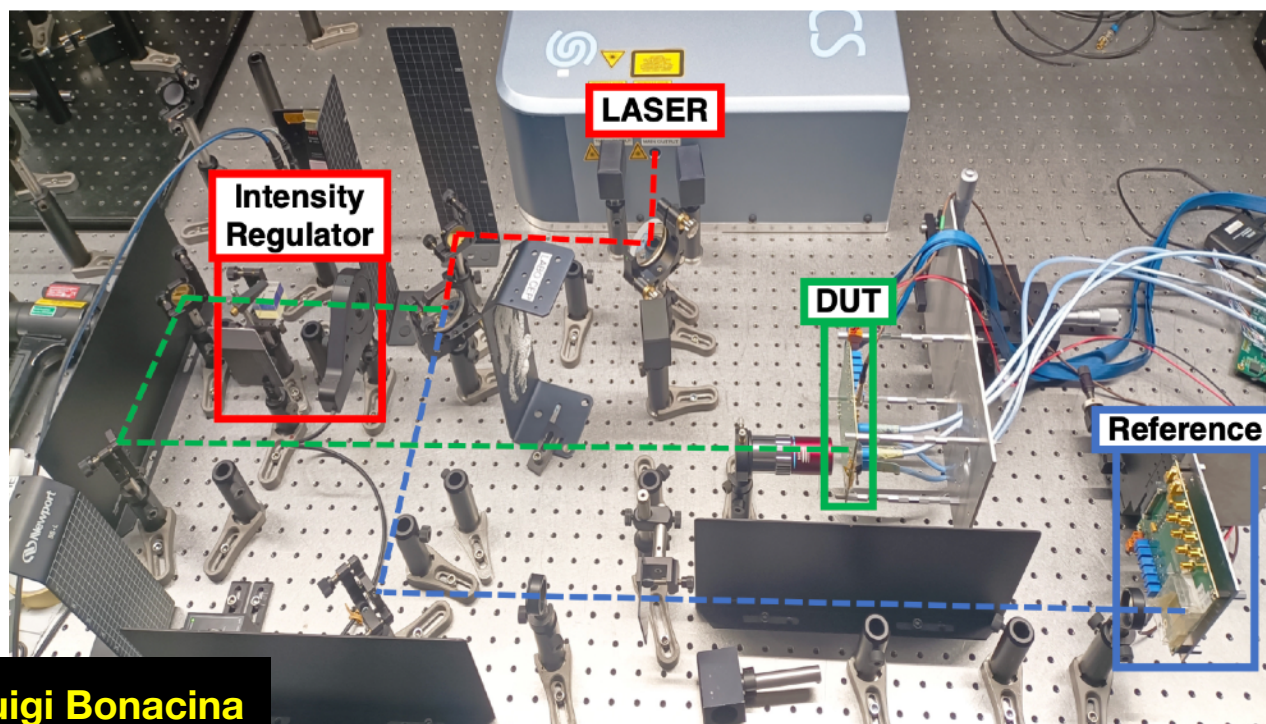


After irradiation
to $1 \times 10^{16}\text{ n}_{\text{eq}}/\text{cm}^2$



Femtosecond Laser Measurements

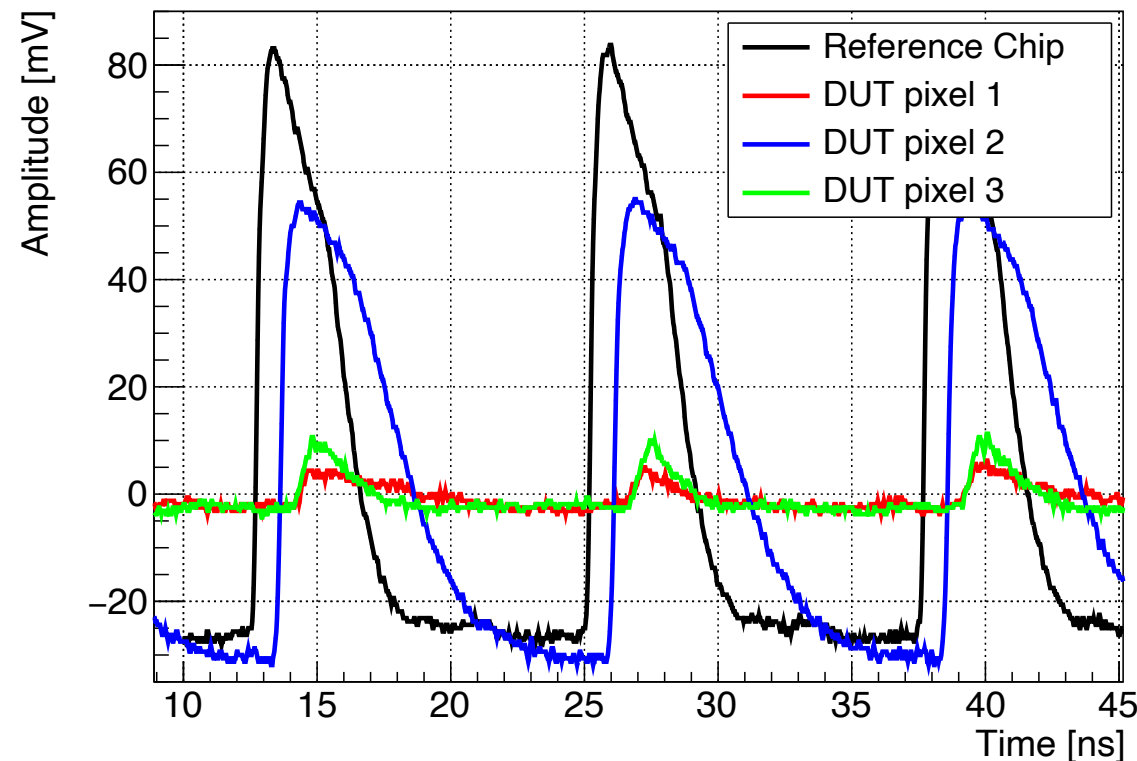
- Pulsed infrared femtosecond laser:
 - Uniform charge distribution: **no charge-collection noise** ($\sigma_{\text{Landau}} = 0$)
 - To study the pure contribution of the **electronics** σ_{Jitter}
- Time coincidence between two of our samples:
 - “**Reference**”: large laser pulse for a precise reference
 - “**DUT**”: variable intensity to study the performance vs. amplitude



Thanks to Luigi Bonacina
and Alexandra Latshaw

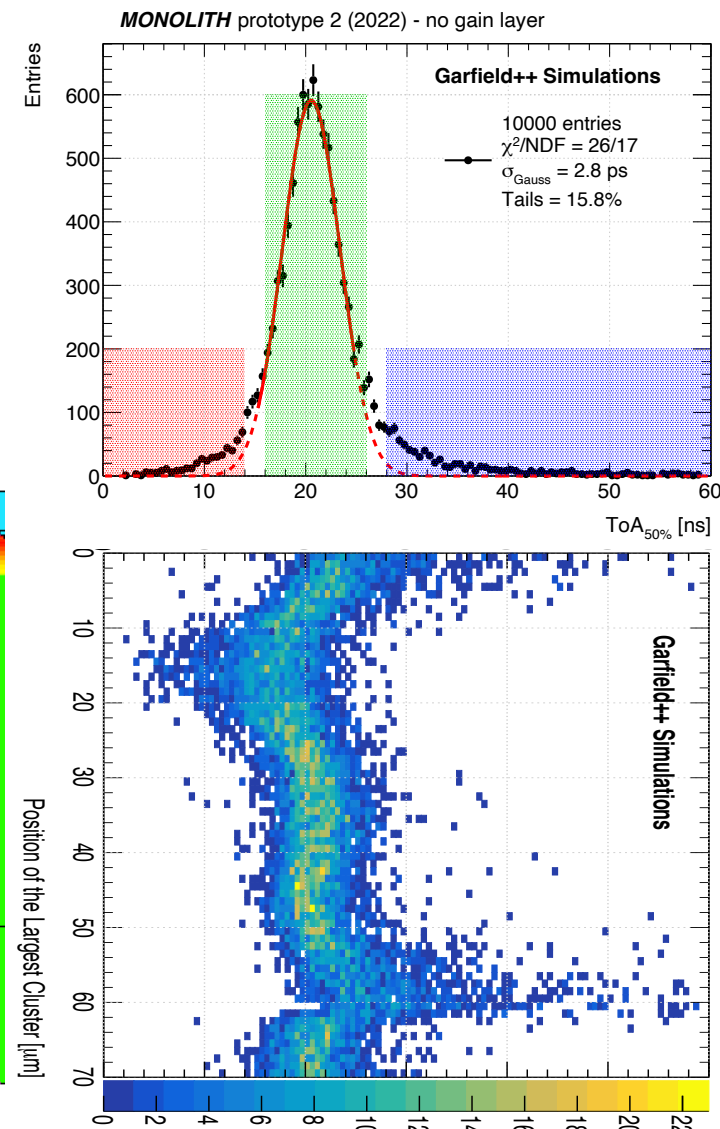
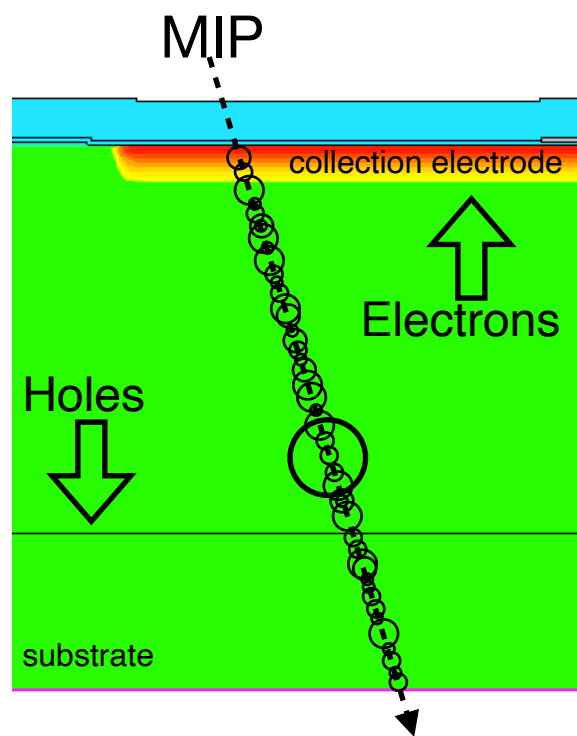
Femtosecond Laser Characteristics

- Pulsed infrared femtosecond laser:
 - Wavelength of **1060 nm**
 - Intrinsic jitter of **100 fs**
 - Hence the name femtosecond laser
 - Repetition frequency of **80 MHz**
 - **Focused** on the DUT on a Gaussian spot with a diameter of $\sim 30 \mu\text{m}$
- The Reference and DUT ASICs can tolerate the high repetition rate of the laser

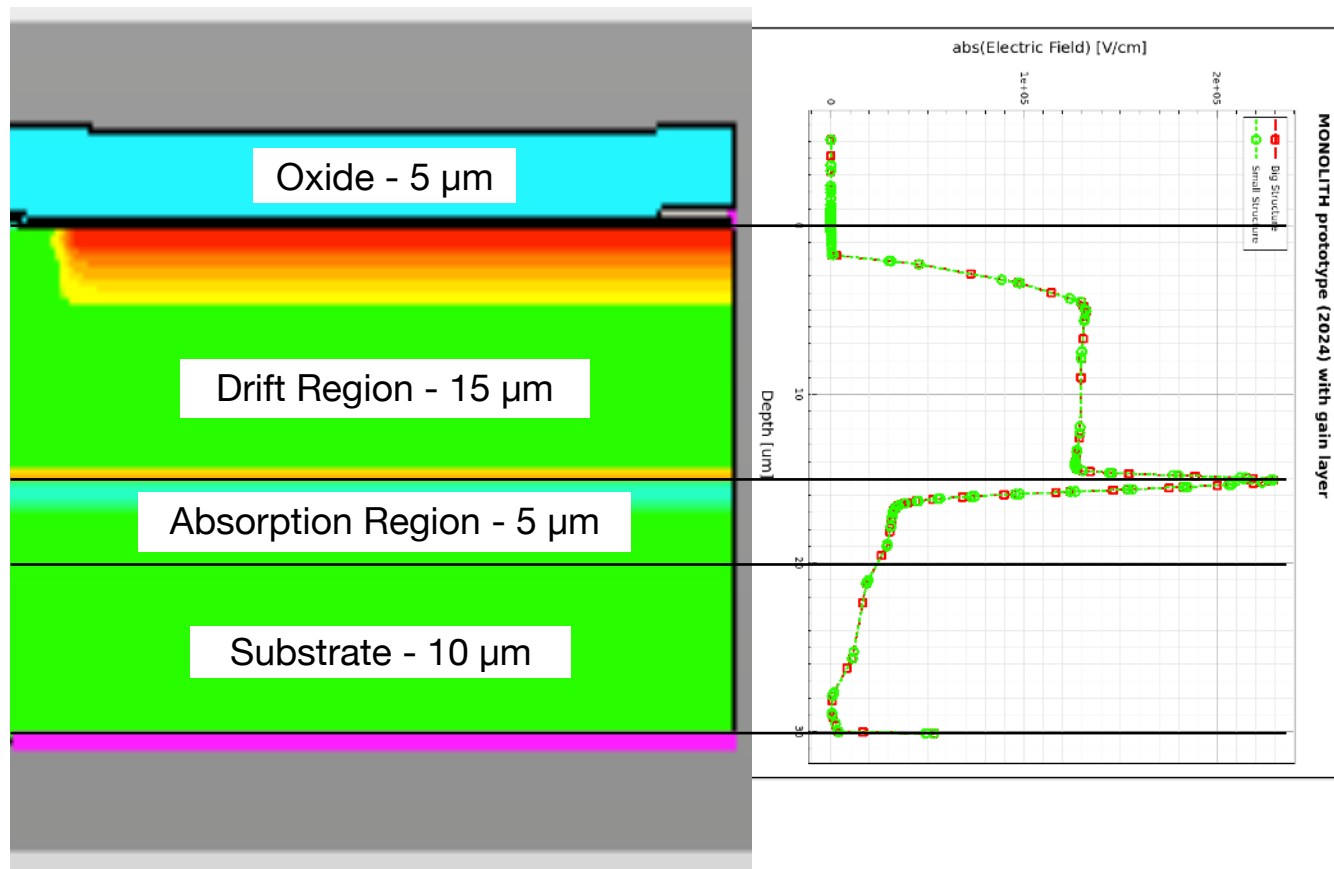
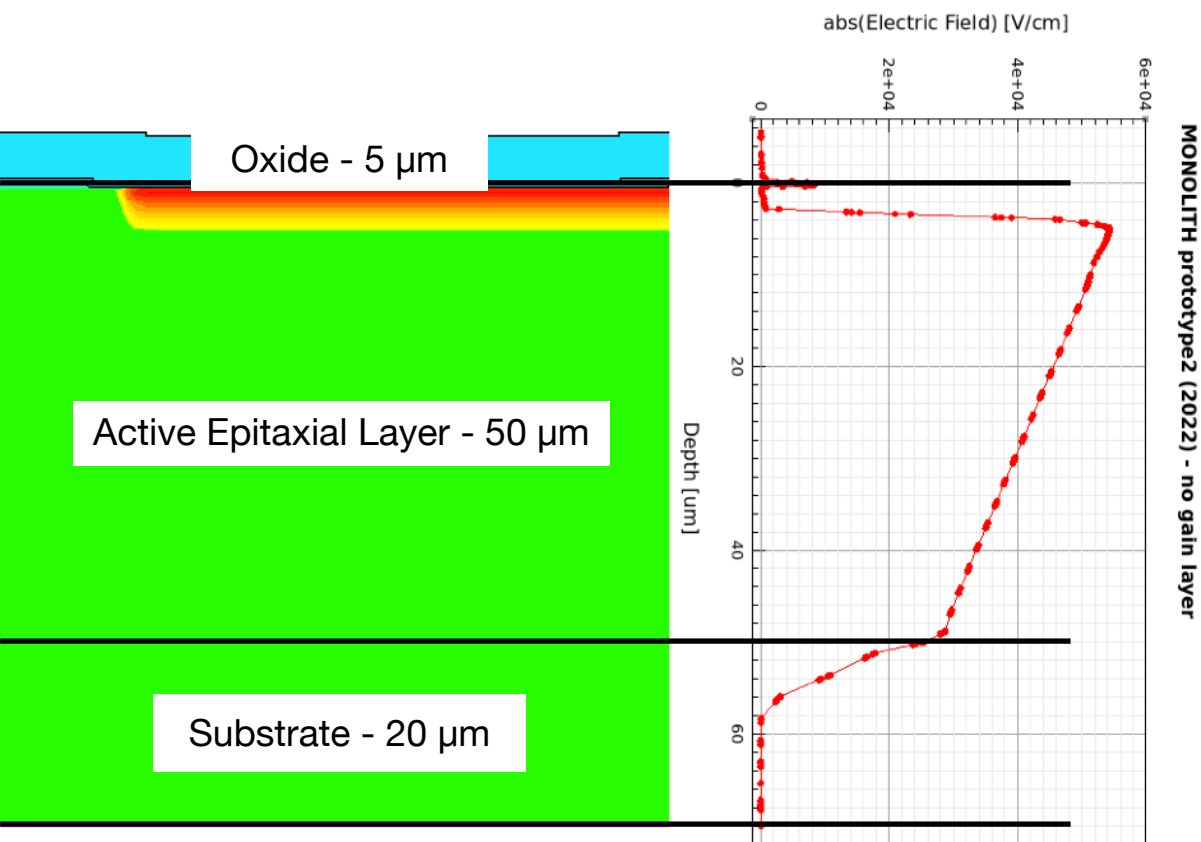


Non-Gaussianity of the ToA Distributions

- Sometimes, clusters containing **more than 1000 electrons** are generated in the detector
- The corresponding voltage signal has a **specific time of arrival** according to the position of the big cluster:
 - Big clusters **between 10 to 20 μm** produce **faster** signals
 - Big clusters in the **peripheral regions** produce **slower** signals
- Garfield++ simulation were helpful in understanding this issue

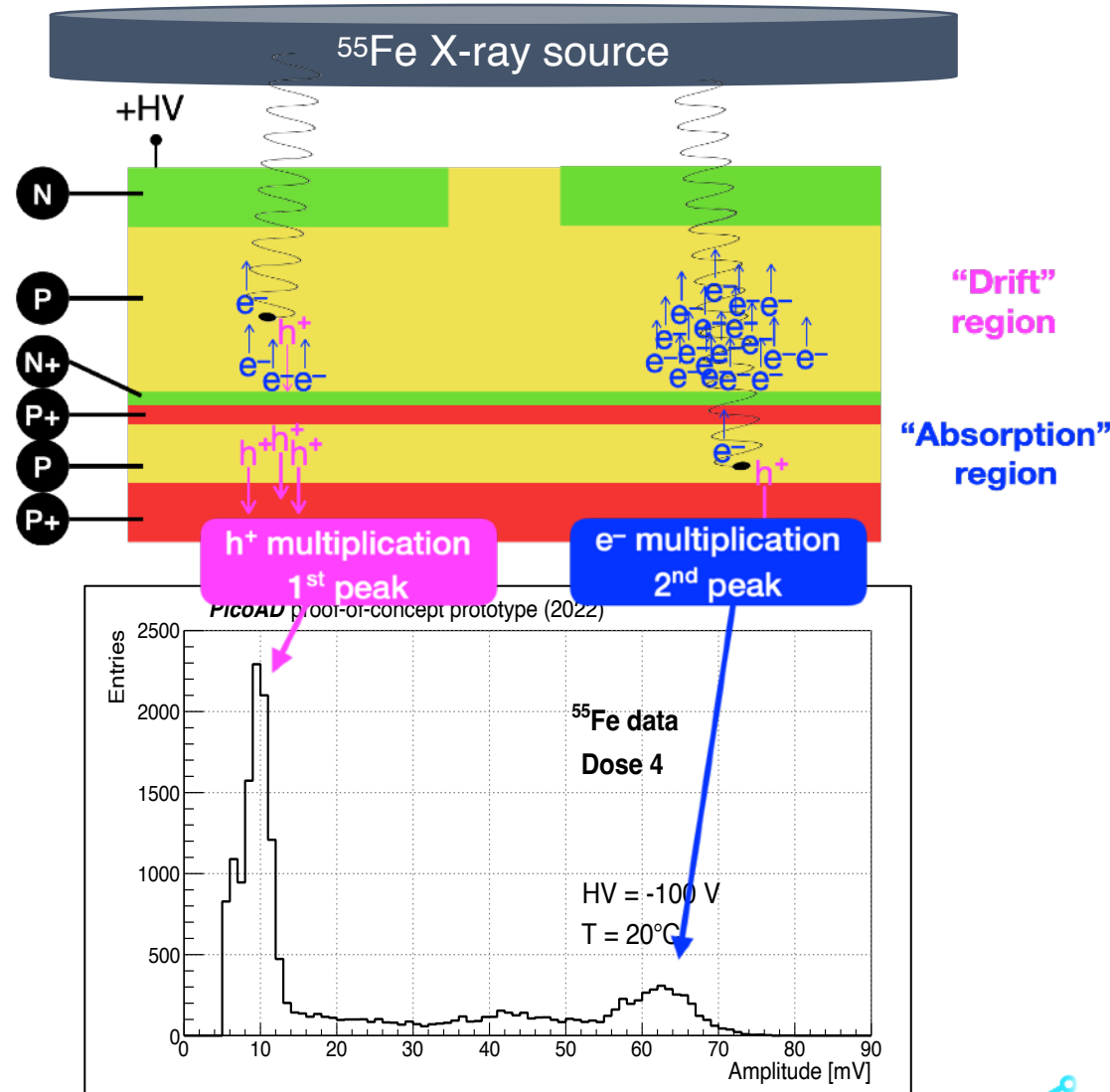


Electric Field Profiles



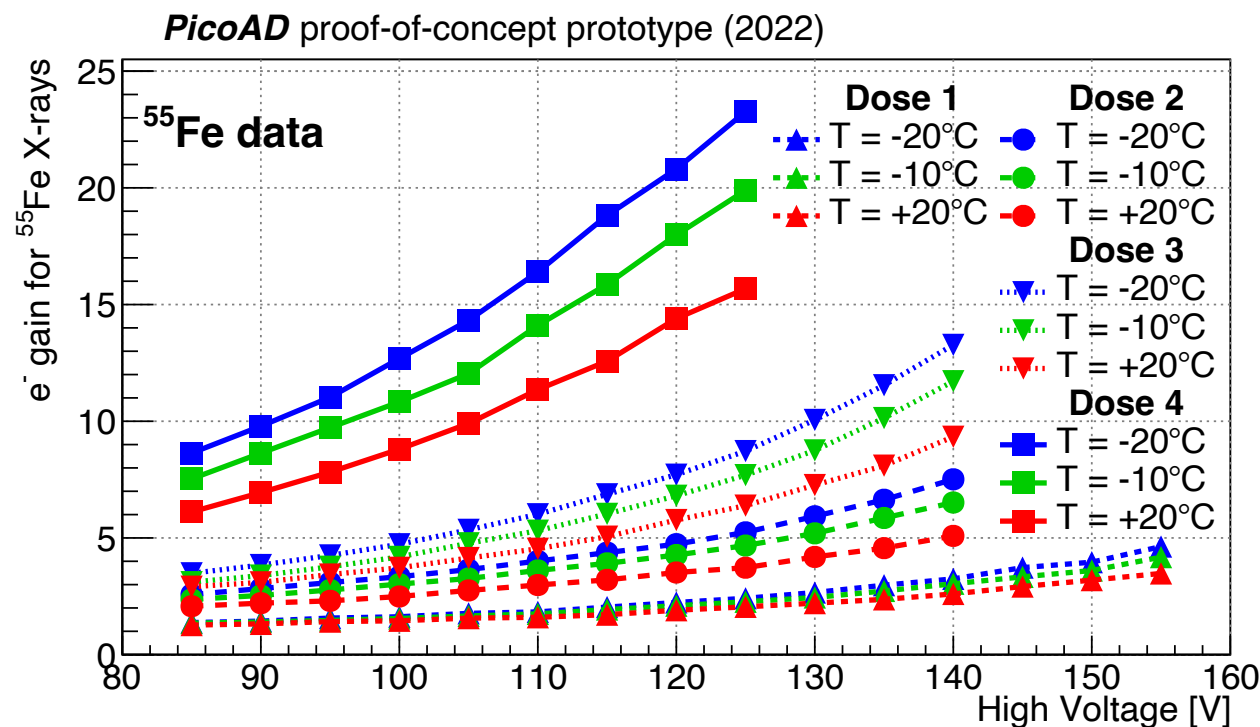
Gain Measurements with a ^{55}Fe Source

- **X-rays from ^{55}Fe radioactive source:**
 - ~ 5.9 keV photons with point-like charge deposition $\rightarrow$ **1640 electrons**
- **Characteristic double-peak spectrum**
 - Photon absorbed in the **drift region**:
 - **Holes** drift through the gain layer and multiply
 - **First peak** in the spectrum
 - Photon absorbed in the **absorption region**:
 - **Electrons** drift through the gain layer and multiply
 - **Second peak** in the spectrum
- We can calculate the **gain for electrons** from the spectra

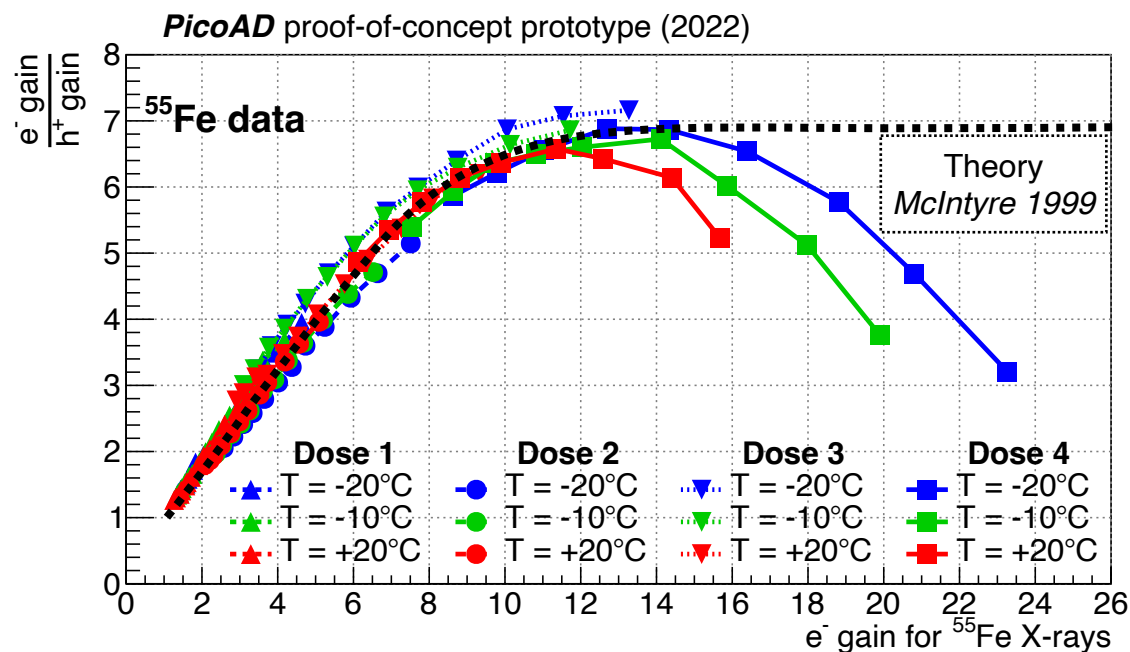


PicoAD[®] Proof-of-Concept Gain Results

- The **gain layer** of the **PicoAD[®]** proof-of-concept prototype **works** as expected:
 - Higher gain for higher bias voltage
 - Higher gain for higher gain layer doses
 - Higher gain for lower temperatures
- But, the **maximum electron gain is 23** for **⁵⁵Fe X-rays** at 125 V and -20 °C
 - It is **smaller than the simulated one** with TCAD

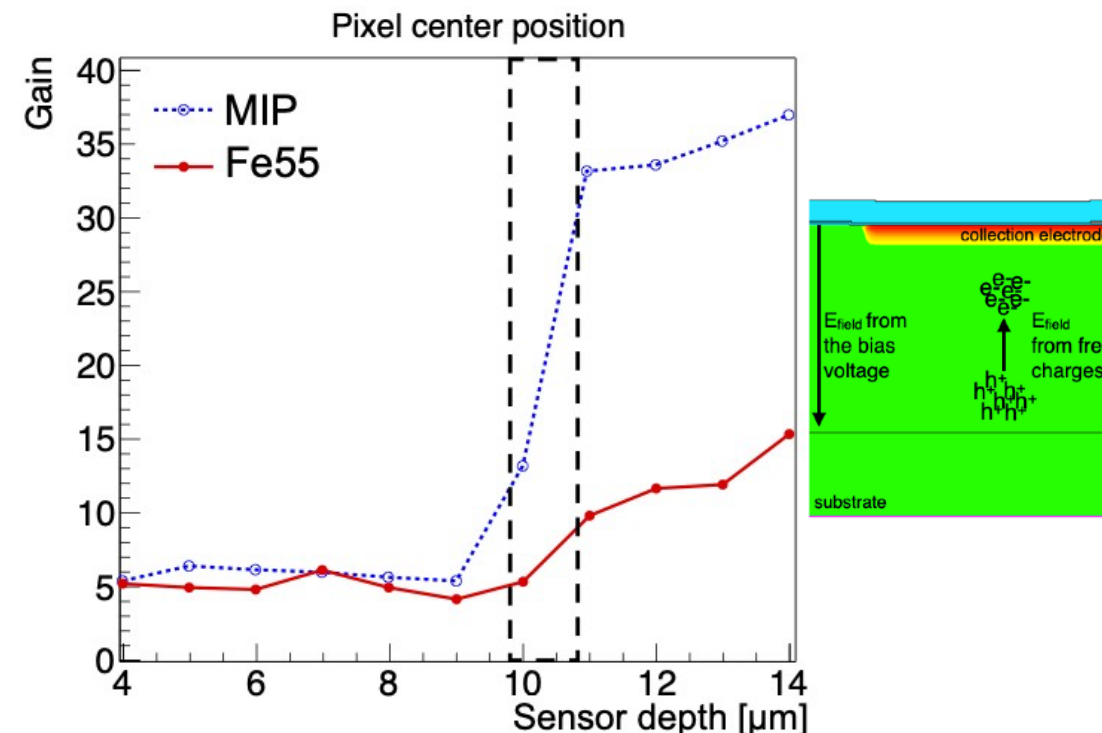
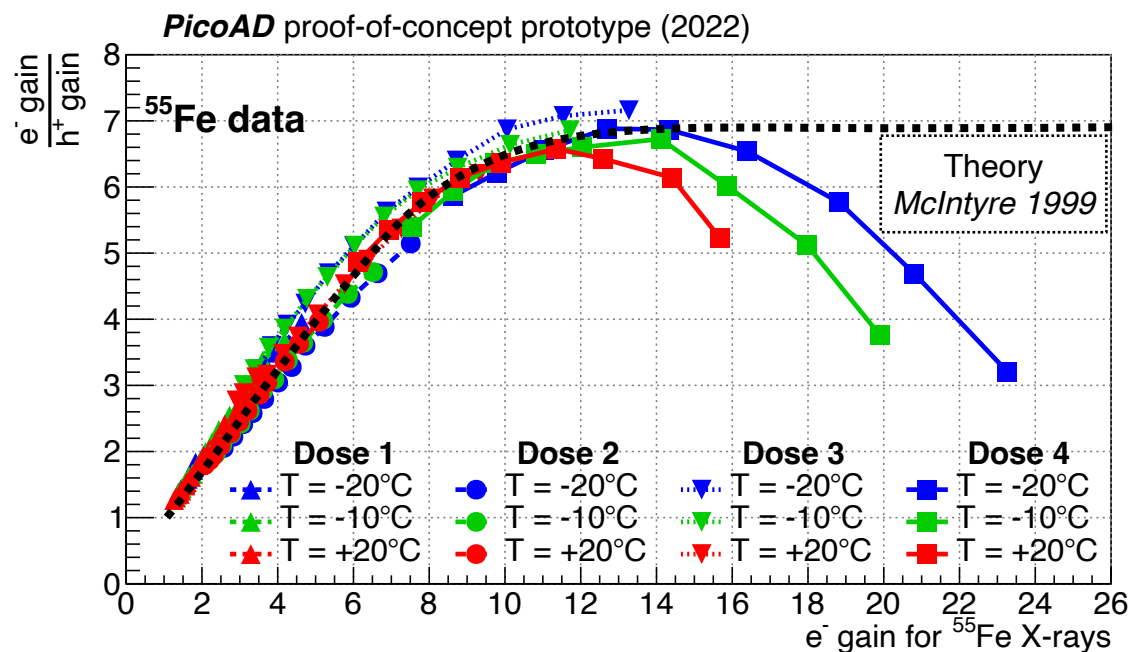


PicoAD[©] Proof-of-Concept Gain Results



- The gain for **holes** and **electrons** can be studied simultaneously with **PicoAD[©]**
- The **gain ratio** as a function of the electron gain deviates from the theoretical trend

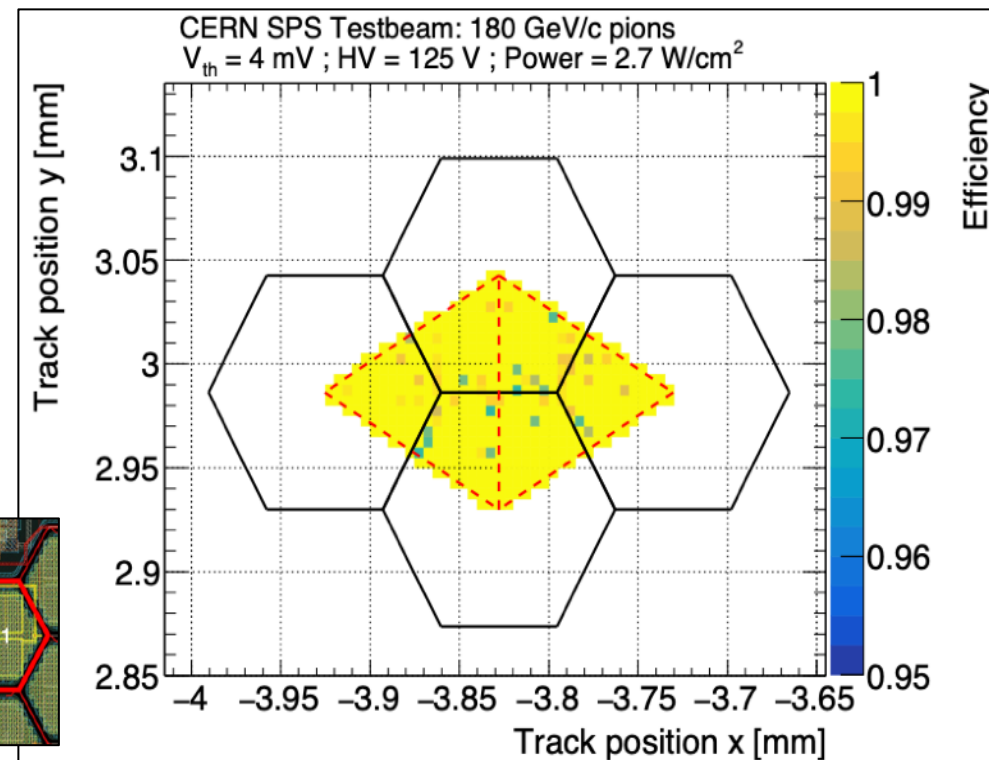
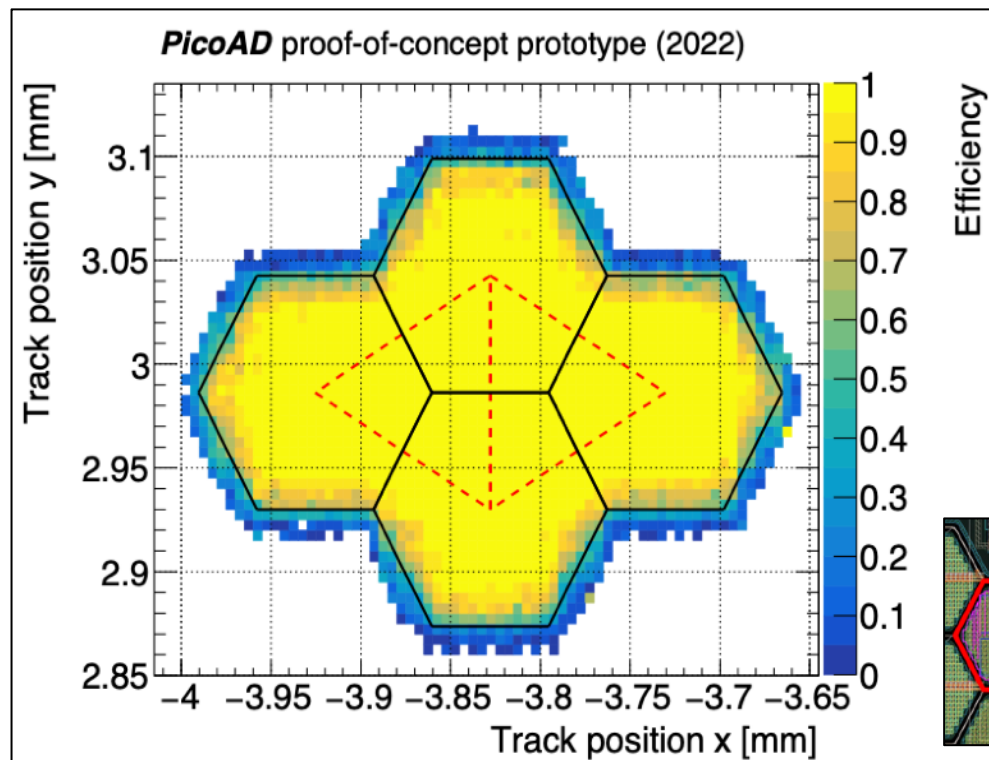
PicoAD[©] Proof-of-Concept Gain Results



- The gain for **holes** and **electrons** can be studied simultaneously with **PicoAD[©]**
- The **gain ratio** as a function of the electron gain deviates from the theoretical trend

- Refined **TCAD** simulations show that:
 - The gain is **suppressed** by the large cloud of charges generated by the ⁵⁵Fe source
 - This suppression is **not present for a MIP**

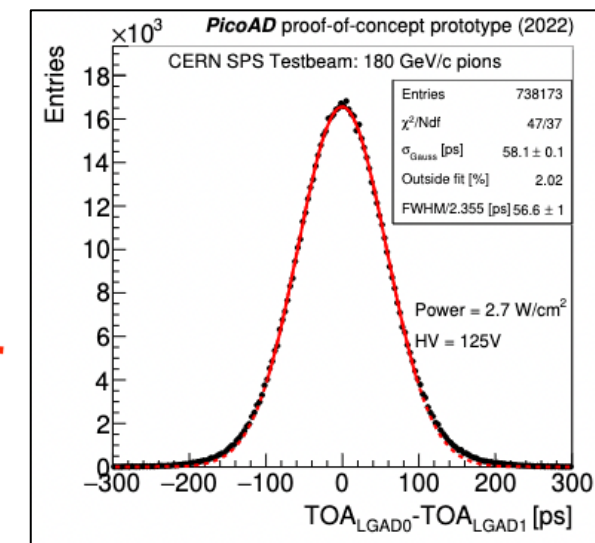
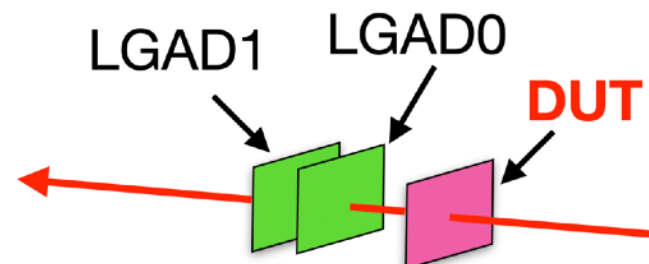
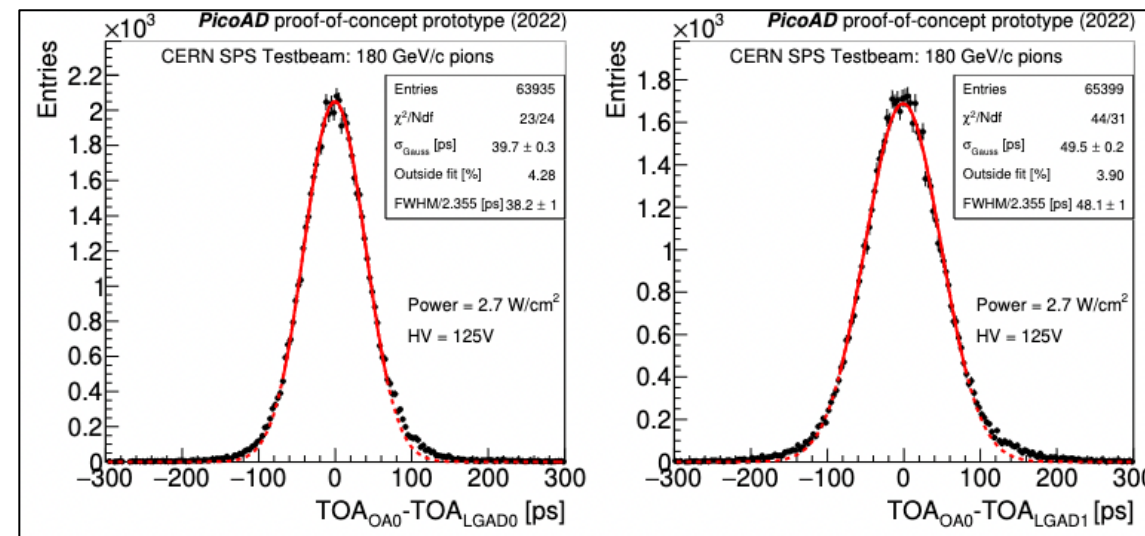
PicoAD[©] Proof-of-Concept Efficiency Maps



- The **apparent degradation** at the edges is due to the finite resolution of the telescope ($\sim 10 \mu\text{m}$)

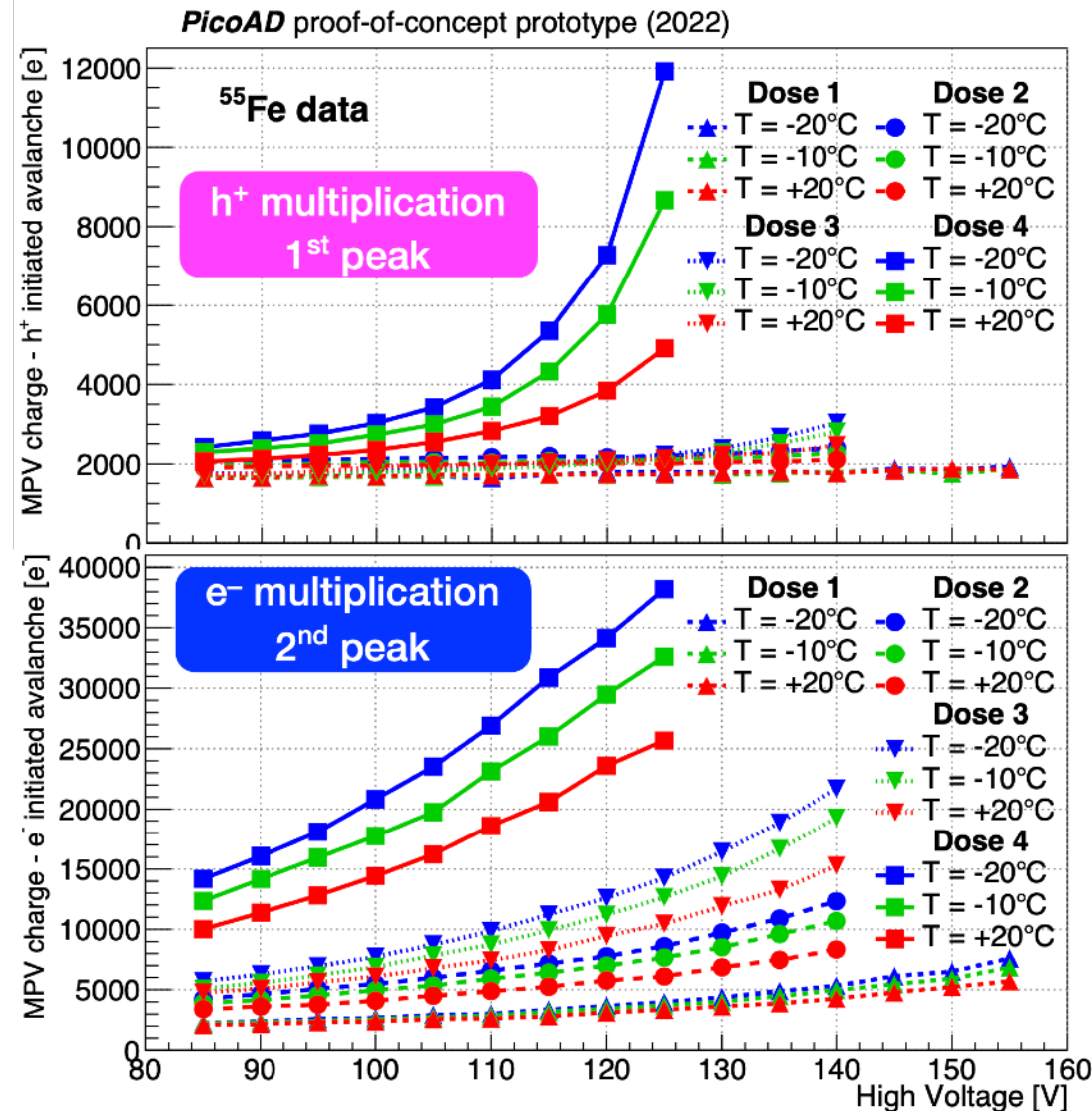
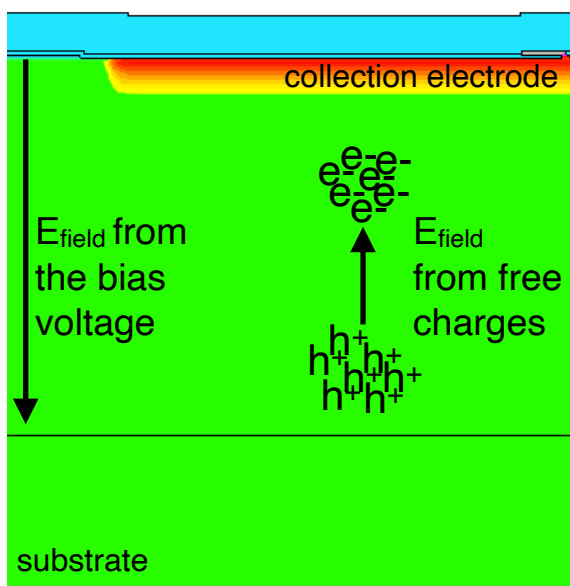
- Selection of two **triangles**:
 - representative of the whole pixel
 - unbiased** from the telescope resolution

- The **Time of Arrival** is taken as the time to reach a fixed threshold
- The distributions are after a time-walk correction
- The distributions are **Gaussian**
 - Except $\sim 2\text{-}4\%$ of the entries that are in **non-Gaussian tails**
- The three σ_{Gauss} from the fits give the three timing resolutions of:
 - The DUT
 - The two LGADs



PicoAD[©] Gain Suppression

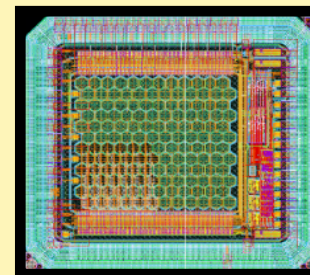
- Only the **holes** have the correct **exponential trend** that the gain should have as a function of the bias voltage:
 - The high number of charges creates an **electric field opposite** to the one created by the bias voltage
 - The **electron gain is suppressed** by the high number of charges



Improvements from 2020 to 2022

- Similar matrix configuration, but:
 - From **standard** 50 Ωcm on 1 Ωcm substrate to 50 μm -thick 350 Ωcm **epi-layer** on 1 Ωcm substrate led to:
 - A smaller pixel capacitance
 - A larger depletion from 23 μm to 50 μm
 - A much larger voltage plateau
 - A saturated drift velocity everywhere
 - **Preamplifier and driver voltage** decoupling led to:
 - An optimal amplifier operation
 - The removal of the cross-talk
 - An optimised front-end electronics layout, with a **semi-differential output**, and **high-frequency cables** led to:
 - A better rise time (from 600 ps to 300 ps)

2020

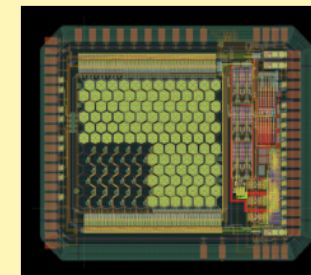


- Hexagonal pixels 65 μm
- 30 ps TDC + I/O logic
- 4 analog outputs

36 ps

[JINST 17 P02019](#)

2022



- Hexagonal pixels 65 μm
- Improved frontend
- 4 analog outputs

20 ps

[JINST 18 P03047](#) [JINST 19 P01014](#)
[JINST 19 P04029](#) [JINST 19 P07036](#)