

Minutes of the UCOAC Meeting
NASA Ames, 2014 October 2014

Attending in person: Claire Max (Interim UCO Director, UCSC), Aaron Barth (UCOAC Chair, UCI), Gillian Wilson (UCR), Alex Filippenko (UCB), Chris Fassnacht (UCD), Sandra Faber (UCSC), Anna Korossy (UCSC), Paula Towle (UCSC), Garth Illingworth (UCSC), Brad Holden (UCSC).

Attending remotely: Tommaso Treu (UCSBUCLA), Mike Bolte (UCSC), Connie Rockosi (UCSC), Crystal Martin (UCSB), Jean Brodie (UCSC), Graeme Smith (UCSC), Alison Coil (UCSD), Don Gavel (UCSC).

General information.

The meeting began with a welcome to new UCO interim director Claire Max, and to new UCOAC member Gillian Wilson from UC Riverside. UCO members were reminded that they serve as a primary conduit of information flow between the UCO director and the astronomical community at their campuses. UCOAC campus representatives were reminded that they should appoint an alternate member to attend meetings when they are unable to attend, and the UCOAC Chair will take a more active role in encouraging alternate members to participate.

The Winter 2015 UCOAC meeting was scheduled for February 9, to be held at a southern California location.

Keck Observatory.

Crystal Martin (SSC Co-Chair) presented a summary of discussion topics from the WMKO Strategic Planning Meeting held during September 29-30 in Oxnard. Key themes are the need to think about unique strengths for WMKO in the TMT era and in relation to LSST and JWST, and to consider Keck's strengths in relation to VLT and Subaru (both of which have ambitious long-range instrumentation plans) and other facilities. The timescale to build new instruments is 8+ years, which reinforces the need to plan now for instruments to be used at Keck during the JWST, LSST and ELT era. New instrumentation ideas discussed include a prime-focus imager, a radial velocity "dream machine", a phased implementation of next-generation AO, and ground-layer AO with an adaptive secondary. Other possibilities include enabling ports for visitor instrumentation at Keck, which would be a unique capability in the ELT era. Possible instrument upgrades were discussed for NIRSPEC, DEIMOS, ESI, and HIRES. A major goal is to develop a vision for WMKO's capabilities extending 10-15 years into the future. The suggested approach is to create "task forces" to study various instrument and AO concepts to push the ideas forward. Planning for the next NSF MSIP call should be a high priority.

TMT.

Mike Bolte summarized recent news regarding the formation of the TMT International Observatory corporation, developments within the TMT partnership, the start of the construction phase, and the groundbreaking ceremony event.

Garth Illingworth and Tommaso Treu presented news and updates regarding the TMT Instrument Science Definition Teams (ISDTs). The recent updates to the TMT Detailed Science Case are being edited, with a goal of completing the DSC this fall. There will be a new call for ISDT membership, and UCOAC members should encourage their colleagues to participate. A major activity for the ISDTs will be developing ideas for "key projects" for TMT. Plans are underway for a 2015 TMT Science Forum meeting in summer, but the location is not yet determined. For the MOBIE spectrograph, work is underway at UCSC and Caltech to redesign aspects of the optical system.

UCO Newsletter.

Jean Brodie described plans for a new UCO Newsletter that will feature astronomy news items from all UC campuses. UC astronomers should submit news items (discoveries, press releases, awards and fellowships, etc.) to their local UCOAC representative who will forward these to Jean. Undecided is whether there should be a separate newsletter for Lick Observatory, or whether all UCO-related news would be in one newsletter. Also undecided is whether there will be a print edition, or whether the newsletter will be electronic only.

Sandy Faber suggested that all Lick telescope users should be required to submit a short description of their recent work at Lick to the Lick Newsletter; this could be required as a section of the proposal text for future proposals.

UCO Budget.

Claire Max described recent developments from discussions with UCOP about the UCO budget, noting that these discussions have been very productive. A new UCO budget was presented to UCOP that is more project-based than previous versions. UCOP has requested a long-range (5-year) budget outline by June 30, 2015. Among the recent changes: UCOP now views Keck, TMT, and Lick as part of a unified "ecosystem" of observatory facilities, and will no longer require UCO to terminate operating funding of Lick Observatory. The future budget plan must include debt repayment to UCOP starting in FY 2017-18. A major change this year is that UCO faculty were transferred to UCSC as of July 2014 and are no longer included in the UCO budget; UCOP transferred a lump-sum payment to UCSC to cover the UCO faculty salaries for a limited time period, after which they will be supported by UCSC. Interim director Max noted that the funding for the UCLA IR Lab was increased by a small amount for the current year. Other staffing changes that were noted included the hiring of a new UCO communications staff member and a new telescope technician at Lick, and retirements including optician David Hilyard.

For the current academic year, UCO needs to update and revise the list of UCO faculty responsibilities and duties, including systemwide participation. A modest amount of funding is available during this year to support UCO service, technology development, or as seed funding for instrument planning. Claire Max, Aaron Barth, and Gillian Wilson will work on drafting guidelines for how UC astronomers can apply for funding to support work that is directly related to UCO's mission and goals. An important component of this process will be reporting and assessment: grantees should be required to submit a report at the end of the funding period to

describe their activities and outcomes. In future years there should be regular calls for proposals for this support, bearing in mind that activities involving a teaching release will need to be scheduled far enough in advance that they can be incorporated into departmental teaching schedules. For those undertaking high-level service activities on behalf of UCO, the Director and/or UCOAC Chair could provide letters to be included in personnel files for merit reviews and promotions, to ensure that UCO service is properly accounted for.

UCO Director Search.

Gillian Wilson gave an overview of the search process for the UCO Directorship. A UC community telecon with the search committee was scheduled for October 31, and astronomers were encouraged to sign up to participate and/or to submit comments to the search committee by email.

Lick Observatory.

Alex Filippenko presented updates from the Lick Observatory Council, including plans for an upcoming study to be carried out by Series C Consulting. They will conduct interviews with astronomers and other Lick stakeholders to help determine future directions and strategies for science planning and fund raising. Filippenko also described recent efforts in fund-raising for Lick instrumentation and operations.

The Lick Transition Study commissioned by UCOP is under way, with a committee that includes facilities experts from LBNL and LLNL.

Graeme Smith gave a summary of Lick staffing changes, including recent hires of one maintenance worker and one telescope technician who is now training for nighttime operations. Plans include hiring one additional new telescope technician as a retirement replacement. There will likely be a gap period in 2015 with only 3 operators, which will require some periodic downtime at the 3-meter. Searches have also been ongoing or will be carried out soon for a new mechanic and a part-time laser operator, as well as new laser spotters. For now, operating hours at the 3-meter are limited to 10 hours per night due to limited staffing.

Don Gavel gave a short presentation on ShaneAO, which is working well. Development of the new laser is underway, funded by a grant from the Moore foundation, and the new laser will be several times brighter than the current laser. A recommendation was made to allow remote observing for ShaneAO since the system is now stable and working well. Plans are being developed to hold a ShaneAO users' workshop to bring the user community together.

The UCOAC then went into executive session for the remainder of the meeting.

These minutes were prepared by UCOAC chair Aaron Barth.