

# Minutes of the Fall 2016 UCOAC Meeting

October 24, 2016  
SETI Institute  
Mountain View, CA

Attending in person: Claire Max (UCO Director, UCSC), Gillian Wilson (UCOAC Chair, UCR), Chris Fassnacht for Marusa Bradac (UCD), Andy Skemer (UCSC), Aaron Barth (UCI), Andrea Ghez (UCLA), Jean Brodie (UCSC), Ian McLean (UCLA), Connie Rockosi (UCSC), Anna Korossy (UCSC), Graseilah Coolidge (UCSC), Ilse Ungeheuer (UCSC),

Attending remotely: Alex Filippenko (UCB), Ben Mazin (UCSB), Alice Shapley (UCLA), Tommaso Treu (UCLA), Mike Bolte (UCSC), Michael Cooper (UCI), Shelley Wright (UCSD), Graeme Smith (UCSC)

Absent: Lori Lubin (UCD), Garth Illingworth (UCSC)

## **General information**

The meeting began with introductions and a welcome to new UCOAC member Michael Cooper (UC Irvine) and UCO Communication specialist Ilse Ungeheuer. The UCOAC also welcomed Jean Brodie and Aaron Barth as incoming UC Keck SSC members, and Jean Brodie as incoming UC Keck SSC co-chair.

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. To ensure full campus representation, UCOAC campus representatives were requested to ask a campus colleague to attend any meeting they themselves are unable to attend.

The date of the winter 2016 UCOAC meeting was confirmed to be February 6th, with the meeting to be held at a yet-to-be-determined southern California location [now scheduled to be held at UCI]

## **Awards and Prizes**

Max congratulated Ian McLean on being awarded the 2016 Astronomical Society of the Pacific Muhlmann prize for instrumentation (jointly with Chuck Steidel) for his role in bringing MOSFIRE to the Keck Observatory.

## **Keck Observatory**

Crystal Martin (co-chair) and James Graham rotated off the Science Steering Committee (SSC) in June. The UCOAC thanks them for their service. Andrea Ghez will continue to serve on the SSC.

McLean presented a status report on MOSFIRE which was damaged during a remote engineering test from the mainland in mid-September. The MOSFIRE team suspect that a collimator lens may be broken but will be unable to properly diagnose the problem until a team

including McLean travels to the summit in November. MOSFIRE will almost certainly be out of commission until at least the end of February.

Barth (SSC) and Brodie (SSC co-chair) presented news and updates from the most recent Keck SSC meeting in June, and issues which will be discussed at the upcoming SSC meeting in November.

KCWI-B has passed pre-ship review. Because Keck staff are focused on getting MOSFIRE operational again as soon as possible, KCWI commissioning has been delayed until at least March. The best case scenario is that it could be offered in shared risk mode in 2017B.

NIRES shipment has been delayed from the date stated in the June SSC minutes which was September. More details are expected to be discussed at the upcoming SSC meeting.

The Keck Strategic Plan has now been finalized and adopted.

In Keck support staff news, Hien Tran has left to work at STScI and two new support astronomers have been hired (Josh Walawender and Percy Gomez). Concerns were expressed about the rate of turnover and morale amongst Keck staff. UCOAC acknowledged the fact that the staff have been doing a wonderful job in a tight budgetary climate. It was suggested that a climate survey might help identify high priority areas to improve staff morale.

The UCOAC also discussed the importance of pipelines to scientific productivity. The UCOAC encouraged Max to prioritize providing improved pipelines to the community.

Cross-institution Targets of Opportunity (ToOs) and cadence policies were introduced for the first time in 2016A. Two-year trial periods for both policies are anticipated, with review after the first year.

After some discussion about the importance of long lead-time deadlines to efficient proposal planning, Max announced that the deadline for future UC Keck proposals would be the second Friday in September/March for the A/B semester respectively.

Ghez gave an update on various UCLA development activities.

Finally, the UCOAC discussed the possibility of introducing an additional 3-8 night “medium” category of Keck proposal. It was agreed that this could be an interesting possibility and worthy of further consideration.

### **Communications**

Ungeheuer described plans for a complete overhaul of the UCO website to begin in February 2017. The website will perform the dual role of being the public face of UCO and also facilitating communication amongst astronomers. The project is currently in “feedback phase”, actively seeking to collect the needs and wishes of stakeholders. Members of the UCOAC were requested to review the existing website and provide input on their desired improvements to Ungeheuer.

It is planned to have professional photos taken of Lick. These will be made freely

available for use.

### **China-US Astronomy Exchange Program ("CUAEP")**

UCOAC discussed the current status of the China-US Astronomy Exchange Program (formerly the 10+10 exchange program). One piece of good news, confirmed by the STScI grants office, is that HST funds are not subject to any NASA restrictions on funding activities with China because of the inherently multilateral nature of HST collaborations.

### **Instrumentation mini-grant proposals**

The UCOAC went into executive session to review instrumentation mini-grant proposals submitted in fall 2016. Ten mini-grant proposals were submitted, by teams from several different UC campuses and labs. The proposals spanned a range of topics related to Keck, Lick, and TMT, and included projects for design of new instrumentation, upgrades of existing instruments, and development of software pipelines.

The funding allocated by UCO to this mini-grant call was \$150K, and this funding was oversubscribed by approximately 2.3:1. UCOAC members reviewed the proposals focusing on their relevance to UCO's goals of excellence in instrumentation and technology development, support of the capabilities of the Keck, Lick, and TMT observatories, benefit to the UC astronomical community, technical feasibility, and management plan. PIs will be notified shortly of the outcome of the proposal review.

### **Lick Observatory**

Max reported several developments since the spring 2016 meeting. A new red-side detector and electronics have been installed on the Kast spectrograph on the 3m. The APF primary mirror has been recoated resulting in significant throughput gains, especially at the blue end. Lick has adopted several new initiatives to improve outreach to the Hispanic population including new videos in Spanish in the Main Building and one "Evening with the Stars" summer program in Spanish.

Proposals for large and/or long-term programs on the Shane 3m telescope are especially encouraged because ambitious long-term programs help Lick increase its scientific impact.

While an existing ToO policy exists for Lick, it is designed for interrupts of up to one hour of clock time. Max has received a request for full night ToO interrupts on the Nickel telescope. She is preparing a written policy which she will circulate to Nickel stakeholders and present for UCOAC discussion and endorsement at the winter 2017 meeting.

Filippenko announced that Google had pledged an additional donation in the amount of \$500K for the coming year. A major priority for future fund-raising will be fixing the dome floor of the 36" refractor. Max explained some of the issues for which the cost of repairs is not yet known.

### **UCO Business**

Max described the current status of the search for the new UCO Deputy Director. Max also announced a new category of "service" mini-grant proposal designed to provide teaching and summer buyout to UC astronomers performing major service activities for UCO e.g., chairing committees, leading major instrumentation proposals, performing significant

fundraising activities etc. It is anticipated that the Call will be released in early January with proposals due on February 1<sup>st</sup> 2017.

**TMT**

Mike Bolte summarized recent news about the project, including the ongoing contested case hearing in Hilo.

*These minutes were prepared by UCOAC chair Gillian Wilson*