

**NGSC Section of the
NOAO Quarterly Report (1) FY2008**

http://www.noao.edu/dir/q_rep/q1-08.pdf

October 1–December 31, 2007

1.3 – NOAO GEMINI SCIENCE CENTER (NGSC)

Program Highlights

By the end of 2007, the final number of peer-reviewed, published research papers based on Gemini programs granted U.S. time showed a healthy 28% increase over 2006. The significantly increasing publication rate signifies the growing maturity of both Gemini as an operational observatory and the U.S. community as Gemini users. Sixty papers based on U.S. programs were published in 2007 and this represents 50% of all Gemini peer-reviewed publications in 2007. The U.S. community receives, as their partner share, about 40% of all Gemini time, so the U.S. fraction is well-utilized based on its partner status.

One unexpected potential change was the November 2007 announcement by the U.K. that it intended to withdraw from the Gemini Observatory on short notice. The public announcement in the U.K. occurred during the first day of the 14–16 November meeting of the Gemini Board in La Serena, Chile. NGSC/NOAO has been in close communication with the Gemini Director's Office and Science Operations since this announcement to remain informed about any impact this may have on operations in the near future and to develop contingency plans in the event of a significant change in 2008 operations.

Status of FY08 Milestones

- Improve the communication links between NGSC and the U.S. user community via improved Web pages and increased conduits through which users can provide feedback on their experiences and views on U.S. usage and participation in Gemini.

***Status:** The NGSC Web pages have been redesigned to allow more straightforward access to Gemini instrument information, and the content has been checked to make sure that it is up-to-date. We have also added pages that provide more information on how to propose for Gemini time and tips on how to utilize the Gemini queue observing bands efficiently. The redesign is continuing in 2008 and we will add concise information about each semester's observing statistics for the Gemini telescopes. Plans are underway to obtain regular feedback from each Gemini program PI (for both queue and classical programs). A questionnaire was prepared for distribution at the January 2008 AAS meeting, to survey community knowledge about Gemini's general organizational structure, the functional role of NGSC, and, for those astronomers who have used Gemini, their opinions and thoughts about the support that they received.*

- Foster closer communications between NGSC/NOAO and the various committees that provide advice: these include the NOAO Gemini Science Advisory Committee (SAC), the Users Committee, and the Telescope Allocation Committee (TAC), as well as the Gemini Observatory committees consisting of the Gemini Science Committee (GSC), the Operations Working Group, and the Gemini International TAC (ITAC). Particular care will be taken to increase cross-links between U.S. members on these various committees.

***Status:** In 2007, the Gemini Science Committee (GSC) was reorganized such that the Gemini Director's Office plays a larger role in the selection of committee members, with (in the case of U.S. members) NGSC/NOAO not playing a direct role, as they had in the past. It is imperative that the NOAO SAC be able to communicate effectively with the U.S. GSC members, so in response to the reorganized and newly selected GSC, the October 2007 NOAO SAC meeting included (for the first time) the U.S. GSC members. This ensures that both committees are equally aware of Gemini issues that affect the U.S. community. The model of inviting the U.S. GSC members to the NOAO SAC meeting will be continued in the future.*

- Provide advice and expertise to the Gemini Observatory in support of the deployment of NOAO's Phoenix spectrograph on Gemini-South until it is removed from this telescope sometime in 2008.

***Status:** With continuing delays in FLAMINGOS2 and the Multi-Conjugate Adaptive Optics system (Canopus), Phoenix will soldier on at Gemini-South through both 2008A and 2008B, as well as possibly into 2009A. NGSC continues to provide technical advice and support (if necessary), largely through K. Hinkle, with additional on-site advice and training from NGSC staff (K. Cunha and V. Smith) in La Serena.*