



Strategy, Tactics, and Budgetary Results

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Even before the current global financial crisis erupted, the US Congress mandated that most Federal agencies would operate at FY 2008 budget levels until at least March 2009. NSF, and hence NOAO, did not escape this mandate. So in the short-term, NOAO must react to a 15 percent budget cut relative to initial expectations for FY09.

Rather than reduce cost uniformly across NOAO, we have elected to make targeted, deeper reductions in consultation with AURA and the NSF. Choices have been made within the following NSF-approved strategic framework.

Strategy

First, in partnership with other private and public observatories, NOAO must develop an open-access US optical/infrared (O/IR) system of ground-based facilities that spans a balanced range of telescope aperture size and scientific capability. Continued operation of KPNO and CTIO at a robust level is central to system development for the immediate future.

Second, the US O/IR System will be enhanced through NOAO participation in the development of new major facilities such as LSST and GSMT. NOAO participation can come in several ways but the main goal is to assure that the requirements of the community-at-large are satisfied by whatever major facilities seek NSF funding and later reach fruition.

Third, NOAO will broaden participation in the NSF science enterprise by engaging individuals, institutions, and geographical areas "...that do not participate in NSF research programs at rates comparable to others." (Quote taken from *Executive Summary, Broadening Participation at the National Science Foundation: A Framework for Action*, August 2008).

Tactics

Within the overall NOAO program, CTIO and KPNO have the highest priority. NOAO must not lose ground gained in the last 24 months on its comprehensive response to the Senior Review. No significant cuts are planned in either program.

Currently, our most important future initiative is LSST. Our involvement in that project must be protected as much as possible. Even if LSST fails or NOAO needs to withdraw, the engineering talent assigned to that program is crucial to our future, and we want to retain them. Thus, major cuts in our LSST program are not foreseen at this time.

The activities of Public Affairs and Educational Outreach (PAEO) are important but not at the forefront of the NOAO mission. Unfortunately, current PAEO ambitions exceed available resources. Therefore, PAEO has been restructured to reduce cost and focus on mission-critical operational roles, such

as media affairs, engaging the astronomical community, and educational outreach activity in local and regional areas within Chile and Arizona. PAEO can expand again later as funding and well-justified activities emerge.

Current Data Products Program (DPP) ambitions also exceed available resources. DPP has been restructured to reduce cost and focus on data capture, science application support, and our obligations to the Dark Energy Survey. It can be expanded again later in a considered manner as funding permits.

Other, proportionally smaller programs face roughly 5–10 percent cost reductions.

Results

In total, the NOAO staff complement has been reduced by roughly 25 positions relative to our original plan for FY 2009. About half of the staff reduction comes from simply leaving positions open or planned positions unfilled. Our total projected expenses have been reduced by roughly \$3 million.

While this is a difficult moment, I believe we have protected the NOAO core program and are well positioned to respond quickly to improved financial conditions when they occur. I also remain optimistic about the five-year NOAO outlook. I will keep you abreast of developments through our e-newsletter *Currents*.

Observatoire de Paris Honors Stephen Ridgway

Stephen Ridgway of the NOAO scientific staff was awarded an honorary doctorate degree by the Observatoire de Paris in recognition of more than two decades of forefront work on high angular resolution imaging using the techniques of spatial interferometry.

Known for his work in both experimental and observational infrared astronomy, Ridgway is the author of more than 250 publications. His research has included identification of the molecular constituents of stars, planets, satellites, and gas clouds, particularly water, phosphine, acetylene, and methane. His studies of stellar angular diameters contributed to a recalibration of the effective temperature scale of cool stars.

Ridgway is also an adjunct professor with the Georgia State University, and recently served as a Program Scientist and Program Executive at NASA Headquarters. His work was previously honored with a Blaise Pascal International Research Chair in 2002.

Bob Blum Appointed Interim NOAO Deputy Director

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Bob Blum has been appointed interim NOAO Deputy Director until at least mid-2009. Bob joined NOAO as a staff astronomer at CTIO in 1997 working in support of near infrared instruments and observers at the Blanco 4-meter telescope and later at SOAR. When Gemini came on line, Bob worked to support US observers within the NOAO Gemini Science Center.

While at CTIO, Bob helped to manage the site testing program in Chile for the Thirty Meter Telescope project. In 2006, Bob and family relocated to Tucson after nine years in Chile.