



U S G P

U.S. GEMINI PROGRAM

Gemini Call for Proposals Readiness Review

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In early November the Gemini Project and Observatory held a “Call for Proposals Readiness” Review. The Review Panel, Chaired by Fred Chaffee (Director of the W.M. Keck Observatory) looked at whether the Gemini North Telescope, its first facility instrument (NIRI), the Science Operations Team and the National Gemini Offices (NGOs) would be ready for our first “call for proposals”. Their conclusions were instructive.

They were “enormously impressed by the state of readiness of the telescope and of the NGOs to receive proposals, manage the TAC process and forward the proposals to Gemini in a uniform way so they can be assembled into a combined classical and queue schedule. Similarly, [they] were impressed with the results of the immense amount of work that has gone into the web-based proposal planning and submittal process, and the training program at Gemini HQ for those charged with disseminating this information to potential users in the partner countries.” The Review Panel however were concerned that “Gemini is attempting to break new ground on many levels—[for example] its use of queue scheduling, its serving of a global users community, [and] its eventual operation of two telescopes with a single team of engineers. We feel strongly that such an ambitious program requires a much higher level of readiness than ever before and believe that it would be

essential to have a first-class NIRI [Near Infrared Imager] to offer its users at the beginning of Gemini Science operations”. The Panel is concerned that NIRI and its associated detector systems do not yet meet the “higher level of readiness” required. NIRI has completed a very successful first cool down as a fully assembled instrument; however, it will not be until the next cool down that we anticipate a demonstration of its scientific performance.

Therefore, before issuing our first call for proposals and setting a proposal deadline, Gemini will:

1. Undertake a further in-depth review of NIRI’s performance as part of the planned acceptance testing of this instrument and its associated systems after its next cool down in January 2000.
2. On the same time scale, reassess the state of readiness of the telescope and associated systems.
3. Ask, in line with the recommendations of the Review Panel, that all the National Gemini Offices and University of Hawaii conduct end-to-end tests of their proposal submission and forwarding processes.

We are planning to hold a “Science Operations Readiness Review” of the Gemini North Telescope in May of 2000.



NOAO Supports US Gemini Investigators

Todd Boroson and Bob Schommer

Each of the Gemini partner countries (US, UK, Canada, Australia, Chile, Argentina, and Brazil) has a national Gemini office that will provide support to its astronomers. In the US, that office is the US Gemini Program (USGP) at NOAO in Tucson and La Serena. While the Gemini Observatory will assist observers who come to use the telescope, the USGP will provide all assistance before and after the observing run. This includes the proposal and time allocation process, assistance for proposal writers and those planning their observations, support for users and prospective users to understand the instrumental capabilities and performance, as well as the provision of and support for data reduction software.

Three NOAO scientists will play a critical role in assisting US investigators planning Gemini observations. Mike Merrill will serve as NOAO Mirror Scientist for the Gemini facility instrument NIRI (the Near Infra-Red Imager). Patrice Bouchet will serve as Mirror Scientist for the OSCIR mid-infrared camera and spectrometer on loan from the University of Florida, and Tod Lauer and Steve Ridgway will serve as Mirror Scientists for the UH adaptive optics system Hokupa'a with the QUIRC infrared camera. These Mirror Scientists are already up to speed on Gemini instruments, and will be reviewing documentation, developing data reduction procedures, and responding to queries

from investigators. If you have questions about the use of these instruments on Gemini, feel free to contact the US Mirror Scientists.

US investigators planning to submit proposals for time on the Gemini North telescope should also become familiar with the Gemini HelpDesk. The HelpDesk is the primary means by which individuals can make requests for information about science operations on Gemini. Investigators submit queries via the Web or by e-mail, and the query will be answered automatically by the HelpDesk software at the International Gemini Observatory. If an answer to the question is not available, the query will be routed to the national project office of the person asking the question (for US investigators, this is NOAO, where our Mirror Scientists will search out the answer and respond to the query). The answer will be saved in the HelpDesk system to be used again for similar queries. If Mike, Patrice, Tod, or Steve are unable to answer the question, they can call on Gemini experts at IGO and in other partner countries to find an answer. The Gemini HelpDesk will be available via <http://www.us-gemini.noao.edu/> at the time that the first call for proposals is issued. Investigators with questions about the proposal process itself can send e-mail to noaoprop-help@noao.edu, and a member of the NOAOprop Team (Jeannette Barnes, Dave Bell, Jane Kennedy, or Caty Pilachowski) will respond promptly with an answer!

