

DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

NATIONAL OPTICAL ASTRONOMY OBSERVATORY

Two New Associate Directors of NOAO

Jeremy Mould

It is a pleasure to announce the appointment of Taft Armandroff as Director of the NOAO Gemini Science Center (NGSC). Taft's energy and enthusiasm will carry the center into a future in which the national astronomy community gets to know the twin 8-meter telescopes intimately, and Gemini becomes a prolific source of astronomy discoveries.

As Taft says in the NGSC section of this *Newsletter*, there is a great deal to do. There are US instruments to deliver, new ones to plan, and data reduction tools needed that are only concepts at present. There are observers who know NOAO instruments, but don't know GMOS. In all of these areas and more, the NGSC team is at the service of our community.

This would be an overwhelming solo task for the international Gemini Observatory (which is still quite busy commissioning instruments). With the help of the national centers like NGSC, Gemini can deal with a complex partnership as if it were a simple one.

A warm welcome also to David Sprayberry, who joins us to lead the Major Instrumentation Program at NOAO. The Major Instrumentation Program combines the resources of our Engineering and Technical Services people in Tucson and in La Serena. Our objective is to take on bigger challenges in instrumentation by combining forces. It is a particular pleasure to announce David's appointment as NOAO's Associate Director for Instrumentation.

David comes to us from the W.M. Keck Observatory, where he was Associate Director for Observing Support, and responsible for new instrument integration and nighttime operations.

This program too will be very busy over the coming year. Delivery of GNIRS to Gemini is close, detailed design is underway for the NOAO Extremely Wide Field IR imager (NEWFIRM), and plans are developing for a new array data acquisition system and adaptive optics for SOAR.

These are all big projects and they require coherent management motivated by science. I congratulate David on taking up his new responsibilities, which include long-range planning for the national observatory's instrumentation, a subject on which he will want input from all of us.





TMT Consortium

Jeremy Mould

Half of the 8- to 10-meter class telescopes in existence were built by consortia of universities, and the other half by international partnerships. So it is not surprising that there is intense institutional interest in 20- to 30-meter telescopes, as befits the top-ranked ground-based optical/infrared (O/IR) priority of the Decadal Survey.

Last year, Cornell University, Indiana University, and NOAO all played their part in focusing this institutional interest by hosting a steadily growing consortium of institutions interested in 20-meter or larger O/IR telescopes. A December 2002 meeting in Tucson included representatives from the University of Arizona, University of Toronto, Indiana University, CFHT, the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, Cornell University, NOAO, the Carnegie Observatories, the Herzberg Institute of Astrophysics, University of Chicago, University of Texas, University of Virginia, and

INAOE and UNAM of Mexico (Yale University was unable to attend).

The upshot of these meetings has been nucleation around two design efforts, a 20-meter telescope (TMT), following a concept by Roger Angel (SPIE session 4840, 2002), and a large scalable telescope project to be located at a site with low precipitable water vapor. The Magellan partners are pursuing the former concept, and Cornell, Chicago, Illinois, and Northwestern are collaborating toward the definition of the latter.

NOAO engineers are planning to work closely with Caltech and UC in the coming year to pursue the design and development phase outlined in the CELT Green book and the GSMT book, which describe concepts with highly segmented primary mirrors. NOAO scientists are collaborating with the three groups on coordinated site testing.

The GSMT Science Working Group (SWG), chaired by Rolf Kudritzki, expects to hear from all three groups early this year to better understand the science capabilities of each concept. The SWG's emphasis is on assembling a high-caliber public science case able to command LIGO-level funding from the National Science Foundation.

In contrast, the TMT Consortium's focus is on communication. Through the consortium, NOAO leads community participation in GSMT, as the Decadal Survey envisaged. One approach the consortium is considering is for institutions not directly involved in large telescope partnerships to be associate members of a public/private GSMT in which NOAO becomes the public partner.

I expect to chair the next meeting of the TMT Consortium soon, and meeting details will be provided by my office to representatives of any interested astronomy institution.



Presenters at the NOAO Town Meeting at the American Astronomical Society meeting on 7 January 2003 in Seattle included NOAO Gemini Science Center Director Taft Armandroff, NOAO Deputy Director Todd Boroson, NOAO Director Jeremy Mould, GSMT Science Working Group Chair Rolf Kudritzki, and LSST Science Working Group Chair Michael Strauss.

Wayne Van Citters, director of the astronomical sciences division at the National Science Foundation, added words of support for the two science working groups, saying that their pending input would receive strong consideration within the foundation.