

## US Gemini SAC Position Statement

The US Gemini Science Advisory Committee (USG SAC) deeply regrets that the United Kingdom is likely to officially withdraw from the Gemini Observatory on 31 December 2012, and acknowledges the UK's significant contributions to the Observatory, both in scientific discovery and instrumentation. In anticipation of this probable change to the Gemini partnership, the USG SAC takes the following positions in considering an expanded US share in the Observatory post-2012.

The USG SAC endorses the ALTAIR prioritized recommendations that:

1. TSIP funding be increased, with the goal of expanding available open access time on non-federal facilities. The USG SAC notes that the ALTAIR committee found that the highest ranked preference by US users is expanded access on 8-10m telescopes with instrumentation suites appealing to a broad base of US observers;
2. A greater alignment between Gemini and the US community's scientific needs be pursued via changes in Gemini's governance structure;
3. A larger US Gemini share be acquired "only if the Gemini Observatory becomes more responsive to the US community and evolves to a suite of instrumentation, operation modes and other services that are well-aligned to the needs of the US community.... [A]cquiring a larger share of Gemini will be an important development path if opportunities to expand access to non-federal facilities...are limited";
4. NOAO establish and maintain a transparent roadmap for the development of a large telescope system based on regular input from the US community;
5. "NOAO work with the GSC and the Gemini Board to implement a mechanism for the rapid development and acquisition of modest cost effective instruments that meet near-term high demand needs".

The USG SAC also endorses the recent GSC-sponsored survey of other Gemini partners on their future instrument needs and notes that the results of the survey are generally consistent with the needs of the US community as found by the ALTAIR report. The USG SAC wishes to emphasize the importance of the rapid development of a new capability for Gemini consistent with the priorities established by the GSC and ALTAIR surveys.

Provided that Gemini meets ALTAIR recommendations 2, 3, and 5 above, the USG SAC encourages exploration of pathways leading to an increased US share of Gemini, but notes that this must be contingent upon any 2010 Decadal Report recommendations.

*14<sup>th</sup> March, 2010.*

## **The NOAO US Gemini Science Advisory Committee**

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