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Currents

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COVID-19 Update: In response to the COVID-19 situation, NSF's OIR Lab is taking measures to ensure the safety of its staff and the public.

- Cerro Tololo Inter-American Observatory (including SOAR and all tenant facilities), the Gemini North and South telescopes, and the Kitt Peak National Observatory (including WIYN and all tenant facilities) have suspended scientific operations; only skeleton crews remain at the sites.
- All sites are closed to visitors, and tours and public events are halted. Lab personnel are primarily working remotely.
- The 2020B Time Allocation process is proceeding and the proposal deadline is extended (see below); the Time Allocation Committee meeting will be held virtually rather than in person.
- The Gemini call for Fast Turnaround proposals has been cancelled for March 2020.
- The [Gemini Science meeting](#), originally scheduled for June 2020, has been postponed.

For further details and updates as they occur, please see <https://nationalastro.org/coronavirus/>

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Observing Proposal Deadline Extended: Semester 2020B proposals in response to the call for proposals from NSF's OIR Lab are now due **7 April 2020 at 23:59 MST**. [Read More...](#)

Special Summer AAS Session on Exoplanet Research at WIYN: WIYN Observatory will host a special session at the Summer AAS Meeting on WIYN exoplanet research capabilities available through the NASA-NSF Exoplanet Observational Research (NN-EXPLORE) program. The session will feature science results and capabilities of WIYN's new precision radial-velocity spectrometer NEID and other instruments. Observers interested in learning how WIYN can enhance their exoplanet research are encouraged to attend. [Read More...](#)

US ELT Program Presentations to the Astro2020 Decadal Survey: the US Extremely Large Telescope Program (US-ELTP) partnership recently made presentations to the Astro2020 Panel on Optical and Infrared Observations from the Ground. [Read More...](#)

MSE2020 Meeting Rescheduled for October: The Maunakea Spectroscopic Explorer collaboration meeting, originally scheduled for May 2020 in Nice, France, has been rescheduled to **14-16 October 2020** at the same venue. The meeting will bring together scientists, engineers, and potential collaborators to discuss future plans for the project. [Read More...](#)

Observing Proposal Deadline Extended to 7 April 2020 at 23:59 MST

As described in the [call for proposals](#) from NSF's OIR Lab, observing time in the 2020B semester is available at Gemini, CTIO (including SOAR and SMARTS), KPNO (including WIYN), the automated global telescope network of Las Cumbres Observatory, the CHARA interferometer, as well as the Subaru and AAT telescopes through time-exchange agreements.

Observing resources available through the NN-EXPLORE program for exoplanet research include the WIYN 3.5m telescope, the CTIO/SMARTS 1.5m telescope with the CHIRON precision radial-velocity spectrometer, as well as 300 hours on the MINERVA-Australis exoplanet observatory, which is operated by the University of Southern Queensland. WIYN's new precision radial-velocity spectrograph, NEID, is available on the 3.5m in shared-risk mode.

The revised 7 April deadline applies to all OIR Lab Standard and Survey proposals, as well as Gemini LLP proposals. Questions about the proposal process may be directed to the Time Allocation Committee chair, Verne Smith (vsmith@noao.edu).



Special Session: "The NASA-NSF Exoplanet Observational Research (NN-EXPLORE) Program at the WIYN Observatory"

At the 236th AAS Meeting, 4 June 2020

The NASA-NSF partnership for Exoplanet Observational Research (NN-EXPLORE), which seeks to advance the understanding of exoplanets and exoplanetary systems, supports community use of the open-access share of the WIYN 3.5-m telescope. To highlight the instrumentation and capabilities available to the community in support of the NN-EXPLORE program, the WIYN Observatory will hold a Special Session at the Summer AAS Meeting.

The session will include descriptions of science results and capabilities of WIYN's new precision radial-velocity spectrometer NEID (NN-explorer Exoplanet Investigations with Doppler spectroscopy). First offered in the 2020A semester, NEID is designed for high-precision radial velocity measurements of exoplanet host stars, with a goal of achieving 27 cm/s precision per measurement. The instrument provides open-

access to measurements that enable the study of Earth- and super-Earth-mass planets orbiting bright host stars over a wide range of spectral types.

The special session will also feature the science results and capabilities of other WIYN instruments that can be used for exoplanet research. These include the NASA Exoplanet Star (and) Speckle Imager (NESSI), the multi-object fiber-fed spectrograph Hydra, the WIYN High Resolution Infrared Camera (WHIRC), and the One Degree Imager (ODI). Observers interested in learning how WIYN can enhance their exoplanet research are encouraged to attend.

With the [236th AAS meeting going virtual](#), this session will be held online, within the virtual format being planned for the meeting. Stay tuned for further details and information on how to participate.

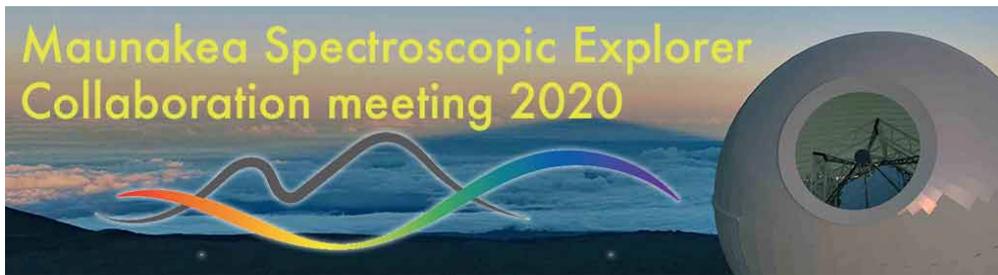


US ELT Program Presentations to the Astro2020 Decadal Survey

Mark Dickinson (NSF's OIR Lab) for the US ELT Program Partnership

On 25 February 2020, the [US Extremely Large Telescope Program](#) (US-ELTP) partnership made presentations in Washington, D.C. to the [Astro2020 Panel on Optical and Infrared Observations from the Ground](#). Team members from NSF's OIR Lab/AURA and the [Thirty Meter Telescope](#) (TMT) and [Giant Magellan Telescope](#) (GMT) projects discussed the objectives and scope of the US ELT Program and its importance to astronomy in the coming decades. They reviewed the scientific breakthroughs that will be enabled by 30m-class telescopes; the observational capabilities of GMT, TMT, and their instruments and adaptive optics systems; the technical status of the two telescope projects; and plans for user support, data services and community-wide scientific engagement at NSF's OIR Lab. The US ELT Program and its presentation to the Astro2020 OIR panel was the subject of a [recent article in the New York Times](#). The US-ELTP partners thank the panel for their invitation to give these presentations and for their thoughtful questions.





Maunakea Spectroscopic Explorer Collaboration Meeting Rescheduled for October

Nice, France, 14-16 October 2020

<https://mse2020.sciencesconf.org/>

In light of recent world events, the Maunakea Spectroscopic Explorer 2020 meeting, originally scheduled for May 2020 in Nice, France, has been rescheduled to **14-16 October 2020** at the same venue. The meeting will bring together scientists, engineers, and potential collaborators to discuss future plans for the project. Presentations will focus on advances in MSE's scientific programs, plans for first surveys, and synergies between MSE and other next-generation facilities. The program will include discussions about current scientific and instrument design choices and will include invited and contributed talks. For more information, please visit <https://mse2020.sciencesconf.org/>.

Contact Us

We welcome your input on this issue of *Currents*. Please contact us at currents@noao.edu. We look forward to hearing from you!

Currents is a spark plug for communication between us and our community. It provides updates—and solicits community input—on observing opportunities and programs and policies on a more rapid timescale than is possible with our *Newsletter*.

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