



December 2012 • Issue 25

Currents

Please join us at the **annual NOAO Town Hall** on Tuesday, 8 January 2013, from 12:45 to 1:45 at the Long Beach AAS meeting. A brief presentation by the NOAO Director will be followed by ample time for discussion of issues and concerns raised by the audience. Key topics include:

- Exciting results from new instrumentation (Dark Energy Camera and ODI),
- Updates on LSST and BigBOSS,
- NSF/AST Portfolio Review report and implementation plans, and
- Overall NOAO budget situation.

We also encourage you to **attend the NSF Town Hall**. The discussion period associated with this event is your chance to discuss issues and concerns with NSF representatives about all matters under their purview, including the Portfolio Review. The NSF Town Hall will be held on Monday, 7 January 2013, from 12:45 to 1:45.

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NSF Portfolio Review ([Many Endorse System Roadmap Committee Statement](#)):

Nearly a thousand community members have endorsed the statement issued by the Ground-based OIR System Roadmap Committee (SRC) on the NSF/AST Portfolio Review Committee (PRC) report. The statement describes the profound adverse impact on ground-based astronomy and the OIR System if the PRC recommendations are implemented as described in their report. The strong endorsement of the SRC statement, which makes recommendations regarding the implementation of the report, is broadly based, demonstrating that the statement represents the views of the broad community. **We invite the community to attend the NSF and NOAO Town Halls at the January AAS meeting and discuss the implementation of the NSF Portfolio Review report.**

CTIO's 50th Anniversary Celebration ([Conference on "Fifty Years of Wide Field Studies in the Southern Hemisphere"](#)): To celebrate the 50th anniversary of NOAO in the South, NOAO will host in **La Serena, Chile** on **6-9 May 2013** a conference on resolved stellar populations of the Milky Way bulge, the Galactic Halo, and the Magellanic Clouds. The conference will cover existing observations from large-scale surveys, new surveys in development, and diverse strategies that can place innovative constraints on Galaxy formation models. The **registration deadline is 1 April 2013.**

System Development ([Workshop on "Spectroscopy in the Era of LSST"](#)):

Spectroscopic follow-up observations of LSST discoveries will play an important, often critical, role in fulfilling the scientific promise of LSST. To prepare for science with LSST, NOAO will host a workshop in Tucson on **11-12 April 2013**. The goal of the workshop is to produce a responsive and prioritized development plan for the coming decade. **Please register by 31 January 2013.**

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Many Endorse System Roadmap Committee Statement on Implementation of NSF Portfolio Review Report

Nearly a thousand community members have endorsed the statement issued by the [Ground-based OIR System Roadmap Committee](#) (SRC) on the [NSF/AST Portfolio Review Committee](#) (PRC) report. The [statement](#), published in the [last issue of Currents](#), describes the profound adverse impact on ground-based astronomy and the OIR System if the PRC recommendations are implemented as described in their report. As the PRC report is advisory to NSF/AST, the next critical step is the development of the NSF plan to implement the PRC report. The SRC statement makes several recommendations regarding the implementation.

The strong endorsement of the SRC statement is broadly based. [Endorsers](#) represent all demographics of the astronomical community: from undergraduates to senior astronomers, located at small colleges to large universities, observatories, and national laboratories, those with and without institutional access to observing facilities, and who study topics from the solar system to the edge of the known Universe. The vast majority of endorsers are US-based.

The broad base of support for the SRC statement demonstrates that the statement represents the views of the broad community.

In endorsing the SRC statement, the broad community calls on NSF to:

- **Maintain the health of the profession** by recognizing the critical need for instrumentation development and open access to observing resources.
- **Preserve opportunity** by developing a feasible transition plan for Kitt Peak, that (1) enables uninterrupted operation of tenant facilities, (2) allows NSF-funded facilities to transition smoothly to a new funding model that includes a larger fraction of non-NSF sources, and (3) preserves open access to the Mayall, fully or partially. BigBOSS on the Mayall is an opportunity to share Mayall costs with other partners while carrying out highly compelling NWNH science. Modest NSF funding for Mayall operations before and during the survey would enable community use of the BigBOSS instrument and access to BigBOSS Survey data, a highly leveraged approach that would deliver a tremendous resource to the community.
- **Preserve and coordinate investment in instrumentation** by maintaining NSF investment in instrumentation and creating a funding process that promotes coherent strategy for instrumentation development across the OIR System.
- **Be flexible** by empowering NOAO and the community to find creative ways to maximize the scientific return from NSF investment in facilities, and by removing implementation restrictions that hinder the achievement of that goal.
- **Engage AURA** to respond flexibly to the PRC recommendations to maximize the scientific efficiency of NSF funds, while preserving options for more optimistic budget scenarios for as long as possible. This flexibility should include the exploration of cross-facility (NOAO, Gemini, LSST) optimization of supporting infrastructure(s).

We invite the community to discuss these results at the NSF and NOAO Town Halls at the January AAS meeting. The [petition website](#) remains open for those wishing to add their voice.

Related Links:

- [The System Roadmap Committee Statement](#)
- [List of Endorsers](#)
- [System Roadmap Committee's Petition Website](#)
- [Online Community Forum for Comments and Questions](#)
- [Previous Currents Article Describing the Statement and Petition](#)
- [System Roadmap Committee Website](#)

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CTIO's 50th Anniversary Conference on "Fifty Years of Wide Field Studies in the Southern Hemisphere"

The advent of wide-field CCD cameras on 4-m class telescopes, which enabled surveys of the sky to significant depths, has led to new perspectives on the formation of our Galaxy. In particular, the selection of the Cerro Tololo site in November 1962, enabled a mapping of the, until then, relatively inaccessible Southern skies.

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of NOAO in the South, NOAO will host in **La Serena, Chile** on **6-9 May 2013** a conference on resolved stellar populations of the Milky Way bulge, the Galactic Halo, and the Magellanic Clouds. The conference will cover existing observations from large-scale surveys, new surveys in development, and diverse strategies that can place innovative constraints on Galaxy formation models. The conference will also highlight new capabilities, such as the wide-field camera DECam, and how to use these efficiently in the era of "big data" science.

CTIO's impact on astronomy has far surpassed its original mission to provide world-class facilities for observations of the southern sky. The celebratory meeting will be an opportunity to share not only science, but also stories and memories of the many events and exceptional characters that have helped shape CTIO. Invited talks will therefore address the scientific as well as cultural history of CTIO. The program will include:

- The Stellar Population of the Galactic Bulge
- Chemical Abundances in the Galactic Bulge
- Galactic Clusters in the Galactic Bulge
- Modeling the Formation of the Galactic Bulge
- Old Stellar Populations of the Magellanic Clouds
- Young Stellar Objects in the Large Magellanic Cloud
- Variable Stars in the Magellanic Clouds and Galactic Center
- Star formation and the IMF in the Magellanic Clouds
- CTIO Science Highlights

Please register for the meeting at the [conference website](#) where further information on the conference is also available. The **registration deadline is 1 April 2013**.

Questions for the conference organizers, Andrea Kunder and Sean Points (NOAO), are welcome at ctio50loc@ctio.noao.edu.

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System Development Workshop on “Spectroscopy in the Era of LSST”

Spectroscopic follow-up observations of LSST discoveries will play an important, often critical, role in fulfilling the scientific promise of LSST. To prepare for science with LSST, NOAO will host a workshop on **11-12 April 2013** in Tucson. The workshop will bring together astronomers working on a wide array of LSST science topics to discuss the needs for follow-up spectroscopic facilities, instruments, and observing modes.

The goal of the workshop is to produce, for NOAO and the Ground-based OIR System, a responsive and prioritized development plan for the coming decade, so that the community will be ready to take advantage of all that LSST will offer.

The workshop has no registration fee. To register please visit the [workshop website](#).

Please register by 31 January 2013.

Questions regarding the workshop may be addressed to the workshop chair Tom Matheson (matheson@noao.edu).

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Contact Us

Your input is welcome on any of these issues. Please send your thoughts to currents@noao.edu.

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

NOAO is the national center for ground-based nighttime astronomy in the United States and is operated by the Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy (AURA), Inc. under cooperative agreement with the National Science Foundation.

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