

Minutes of the Winter 2017 UCOAC Meeting

February 6, 2017
Applied Innovation
Irvine, CA

Attending in person: Claire Max (UCO Director, UCSC), Gillian Wilson (UCOAC Chair, UCR), Alex Filippenko (UCB), Marusa Bradac (UCD), Michael Cooper (UCI), Andy Skemer (UCSC), Shelley Wright (UCSD), Aaron Barth (UCI), Andrea Ghez (UCLA), Tommaso Treu (UCLA), Ian McLean (UCLA), Connie Rockosi (UCSC), Brad Holden (UCSC), Gary Channan (UCI), Anna Korossy (UCSC)

Attending remotely: Ben Mazin (UCSB), Alice Shapley (UCLA), Jean Brodie (UCSC), Garth Illingworth (UCSC), Mike Bolte (UCSC), Graeme Smith (UCSC), Ilse Ungeheuer (UCSC), Tuan Do (UCLA), Sandy Faber (UCSC), Anne Kinney (WKO)

Absent: Lori Lubin (UCD), Graseilah Coolidge (UCSC)

General information

UCO members were reminded that they serve as a primary conduit of information flow between the UCO director and the astronomical community at their campuses. To ensure full campus representation, UCOAC campus representatives were requested to ask a campus colleague to attend any meeting they themselves are unable to attend.

UCO Business

UCO Strategic Plan: Max, Wilson, Faber and the committee discussed the need for UCO strategic planning and the importance of publicizing UCO's call for nominations for a strategic planning committee.

China-US Astronomy Exchange Program ("CUAEP"): Faber summarized the status of the China-US Exchange Program "CUAEP". Participation in the program is voluntary. Starting in 2017, UCSC will serve as the UC pilot campus (along with University of Hawaii) [UCSC subsequently signed an MOU with the China Scholarship Council (CSC) in March 2017 and Faber shared that MOU with the UCOAC.] Other campuses wishing to join the program are encouraged to develop a CSC-focused campus website and to cultivate faculty contacts in China. Sandy and Doug Lin have volunteered to assist in making contacts.

Communications: Ungeheuer gave an update on the ongoing overhaul of the UCO website which is expected to be completed by June 2017. The website will perform the dual role of being the public face of UCO and also facilitating communication amongst astronomers. The project is currently in "feedback phase", actively seeking to collect the needs and wishes of stakeholders. Members of the UCOAC were requested to review the existing website and provide input on their desired improvements to Ungeheuer.

New Personnel: Max described the current status of the search for the new UCO Deputy Director. The Pipeline Scientist position has been withdrawn. UCO has some funds available to incentivize the hiring of new faculty systemwide, aligned with UCO instrumentation and goals. It is recommended that campuses who are in the process of carrying out searches this year which might result in the hiring of eligible faculty contact Max as soon as possible to ensure that funds are distributed equitably.

Future of AO: The UCOAC discussed the importance of AO to the future of UCO. Max gave an update on the senior instrumentation faculty search at UCSC which is proceeding nicely.

Keck Observatory

McLean presented a status report on MOSFIRE which was damaged during a remote engineering test from the mainland in mid-September 2016. MOSFIRE was found to have collimator damage (abrasions on one collimator lens and debris on another). Repairs were made to the collimator and MOSFIRE is scheduled to be recommissioned at the end of February. [April 2016 note - MOSFIRE was successfully recommissioned]. Keck is undergoing an external review of technical and management practices to prevent future incidents such as this one.

Barth (SSC), Brodie (SSC co-chair) and Ghez (SSC) presented news and updates from the most recent Keck Science Steering Committee meeting in November 2016, and discussed issues likely to arise at the upcoming SSC meeting in February 2017.

KCWI-B has passed pre-ship review, and will be commissioned in spring 2017. It will be offered in shared risk mode in 2017B. [As of early April, KCWI-Blue is on-sky at Keck II.]

Fabrication of the Keck I Deployable Tertiary has been completed; the instrument is currently in Integration and Test phase.

NIRES installation is tentatively planned for summer/fall 2017. More details are expected to be discussed at the upcoming SSC meeting. [As of mid-April, NIRES has been delivered to the Observatory.]

Repair of the primary mirror segments at Keck is going very well.

The UCOAC acknowledged the fact that the Keck staff have been doing a wonderful job in a tight budgetary climate. UCOAC provided a letter to Max encouraging the hiring of one or more additional support astronomers to alleviate the workload. [We understand that this is underway.]

The UCOAC also discussed the importance of pipelines to scientific productivity. The UCOAC encouraged Max to prioritize providing improved pipelines to the community. [There has been a recent meeting of the Keck pipeline working group, convened by Luca Rizzi.]

After some discussion about the increasing workload on the UC TACs, it was agreed to introduce a new page limit on the Technical Remarks section for the Keck 2017B call. Proposers will also be invited to include an optional section describing their activities in the service of UCO. The possibility of introducing an additional 3-8 night “medium” category of Keck proposal was discussed. It was agreed that, in the interests of time, this discussion would be tabled until the 2018A call.

Ghez gave an update on various UCLA development and fundraising activities. The UCOAC also discussed the April 2018 change in Keck operations funding, which will be shared between UC and Caltech subsequent to that date.

Lick Observatory

Max reported developments since the fall 2017 UCOAC meeting. A proposal is being developed to fund a feasibility study to repair the dome floor of the 36" refractor.

While an existing ToO policy exists for Lick, it is designed for interrupts of up to one hour of clock time. Max has received a request for full night ToO interrupts on the Nickel telescope. She is preparing a written policy which she will circulate to Nickel stakeholders and present for UCOAC discussion and endorsement at the spring 2017 meeting.

Faculty Service mini-grant proposals

The UCOAC went into executive session to review the new category of "faculty service" mini-grant proposals, designed to facilitate faculty systemwide to be able to engage in larger scale efforts on behalf of UCO. Two proposals were submitted in 2017, and both were unanimously approved by the UCOAC. Proposers will be notified shortly of the outcome of the review.

View from Waimea

Anne Kinney discussed "lessons learned" from the MOSFIRE incident. She is currently working on a new five-year Cooperative Agreement with NASA (2018-2023). In the future, WKO plans to offer visiting graduate and postdoctoral fellowships.

OSIRIS pipeline

Tuan Do provided a report to UCOAC on OSIRIS pipeline development. Two major issues (flux mis-assignment and spatial rippling) were identified after the 2012 telescope and grating upgrade (A detector upgrade also took place in 2016). More than 160 nights of OSIRIS data are likely affected by these issues. In 2015, an OSIRIS pipeline working group consisting of ~15 people was formed. In January 2017, funded in part by UCO and Keck, v4.0 of the OSIRIS data reduction pipeline was released:

<https://github.com/Keck-DataReductionPipelines/OsirisDRP/releases/tag/v4.0.0>

Many issues still remain and continuing efforts to improve the pipeline are being made. The UCOAC thanks the OSIRIS Pipeline Working Group for their valiant efforts.

Keck (and TMT) Segmentation Alignment Issues

Gary Chanan made a presentation to the UCOAC about several areas in which Keck and TMT segment alignment might be improved, especially at low elevation.

TMT

Mike Bolte summarized recent news about the project, including the ongoing contested case hearing in Hilo, and the selection of Observatorio del Roque de los Muchachos as the secondary site.

2017 Spring Meeting

The date of the spring UCOAC meeting has been confirmed to be May 22nd, with the meeting to be held at the SETI Institute.

These minutes were prepared by UCOAC chair Gillian Wilson