



## National Optical Astronomy Observatory

Kitt Peak National Observatory • Cerro Tololo Inter-American Observatory • NOAO Gemini Science Center

15

October 2008

Dear ACCORD colleagues:

As you know, NOAO formed the Access to Large Telescopes for Astronomical Instruction and Research (ALTAIR) committee (<http://www.noao.edu/system/altair/>) to develop a quantitative, science-justified list of capabilities for 6 – 10m telescopes, along with estimates of the number of nights needed to serve the US community-at-large in the next 5 – 10 years.

Of behalf of the committee, NOAO conducted a broad community survey of these issues. Based on over 500 responses received, a large and vibrant base of current and potential 6 – 10 meter telescope users clearly exists. It is equally clear that the demand for time on such facilities far exceeds the supply. Other preliminary results will be described shortly in the NOAO e-newsletter *Currents*.

While this survey data is invaluable, additional input from you, the directors of the non-federal observatories, would also be invaluable. We would very much appreciate your input on the following questions:

1 How many science nights per year do you allocate on one or more 6 – 10m telescopes and how large is your active user base on those telescopes?

**LBT (soon) 80nights/year User base ~ 60-75 (UA,ASU,NAU)**

**Magellan 64 nights/year User base ~ Same.**

**MMT 160 nights/year User base ~ Same.**

2 What is a typical over-subscription rate for the telescope time you allocate?

**Self regulating but varies between 1.5 and 4 on the above telescopes; average ~2-2.5**

3 How many science nights per year could you envision making available to the community-at-large via the TSIP or similar program in the next five years (2009 – 2013) and in the five years beyond 2013?

**This depends on the details of the arrangements. As a basis for discussion I believe we would consider offering:**

**LBT ~ 10 nights/year**

**Magellan ~ 10 nights/year**

**MMT ~ 25 nights/year**

We would welcome any additional comment or suggestions you have on how the ALTAIR process can help address community needs or the needs of your observatory. Developing innovative ways to address these needs has bearing not only on the current suite of observatories but also perhaps on federal participation in future, extremely large aperture observatories. **The need is to get resources into the independent observatories in order for them to develop their capabilities. This can result in enormous federal leverage on the non-federal investments already made and is the only way to get more community-access time on large telescopes in the short/medium term. It must be accomplished in such a way as to maintain the creative spirit that exists within the independents. Pressure to provide foreign entities with time is growing; action is needed soon if leverage is to be retained on behalf of the US community.**



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Our next committee meeting is 19 Nov. Receiving your input by 14 Nov would have the most direct influence on ALTAIR deliberations but anytime before the end of November would be helpful.

Many thanks for your time and help, sincerely,

David Silva Larry Ramsey Director NOAO ALTAIR committee chair



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While this survey data is invaluable, additional input from you, the directors of the non-federal observatories, would also be invaluable. We would very much appreciate your input on the following questions:

1 How many science nights per year do you allocate on one or more 6 – 10m telescopes and how large is your active user base on those telescopes?

**LBT (soon) 50nights/year User base ~ 25**

2 What is a typical over-subscription rate for the telescope time you allocate?

**Approximately factor of 2 at this time, but we're still essentially still in commissioning with only one instrument available.**

3 How many science nights per year could you envision making available to the community-at-large via the TSIP or similar program in the next five years (2009 – 2013) and in the five years beyond 2013?

**We are currently committed to ~8 nights per year for 3+ years for TSIP support of MODS. We would certainly consider a similar amount of time for future projects beyond 2013.**

We would welcome any additional comment or suggestions you have on how the ALTAIR process can help address community needs or the needs of your observatory. Developing innovative ways to address these needs has bearing not only on the current suite of observatories but also perhaps on federal participation in future, extremely large aperture observatories. **The only way this process will succeed is if NOAO does not go in to competition with its user base (in my opinion, this has been NOAO's fundamental problem since the 1970s). In this context, it means that NOAO should not compete to build instruments, NOAO should facilitate opportunities for university-based groups to build instruments. The reason the universities should do this is that universities are training the next generation of instrument builders.**



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Many thanks for your time and help, sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Silva".

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Larry Ramsey".

David Silva Larry Ramsey Director NOAO ALTAIR committee chair

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From: Andy Boden <[bode@astro.caltech.edu](mailto:bode@astro.caltech.edu)>

Date: November 12, 2008 10:48:22 PM GMT-03:00

To: [dsilva@noao.edu](mailto:dsilva@noao.edu)

Cc: Shri Kulkarni <[srk@astro.caltech.edu](mailto:srk@astro.caltech.edu)>, "B. Thomas Soifer" <[bts@submm.caltech.edu](mailto:bts@submm.caltech.edu)>, Andy Boden <[bode@astro.caltech.edu](mailto:bode@astro.caltech.edu)>

Subject: ALTAIR: request for input

Reply-To: [bode@astro.caltech.edu](mailto:bode@astro.caltech.edu)

Dear Dr. Silva,

Hi, my name is Andy Boden, and I presently serve as the Deputy Director for Caltech Optical Observatories. I've been asked to address the questions in your ALTAIR questioner from 3 November on behalf of COO Director Shri Kulkarni.

So addressing the questions in your letter directly:

1) How many science nights per year do you allocate on one or more 6 – 10m telescopes and how large is your active user base on those telescopes?

CIT -- two Keck Telescopes \* 365 nights \* 30% = ~ 220 nights / year  
We typically receive proposals from ~ 80 active Keck observers.

2. What is a typical over-subscription rate for the telescope time you allocate?

Because of instrumentation differences the subscription rate is different between Keck1 and Keck2, but the composite subscription rate in semester 2009A is 1.5 (172 req / 112 available). This subscription rate is highly self-regulating (CIT users have accumulated a general sense of what is reasonable to expect and ask for).

3. How many science nights per year could you envision making available to the community-at-large via the TSIP or similar program in the next five years (2009 – 2013) and in the five years beyond 2013?

Currently the Keck community makes available up to 24 nights/year through the NOAO TSIP program. To change this requires negotiation with other Keck partners -- CIT would not be in a position to make a unilateral change in our TSIP commitment.

I've copied Shri and Tom Soifer (PMA Deputy Chair for Astronomy) in case they would like to contribute additional comments. If you have any additional questions please feel free to contact one of us.

With all best wishes for the ALTAIR committee and its work,

- Andy

Andy Boden

[bode@astro.caltech.edu](mailto:bode@astro.caltech.edu)

Deputy Director

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From: Rolf Peter Kudritzki <[kud@IfA.Hawaii.Edu](mailto:kud@IfA.Hawaii.Edu)>  
Date: October 23, 2008 8:14:13 PM GMT-07:00  
To: David Silva <[dsilva@noao.edu](mailto:dsilva@noao.edu)>  
Subject: Re: ALTAIR: request for input

Hi Dave,

Here is my IfA response to the three questions in your in  
Larry's letter.

question 1) Number of nights at 6-10m telescopes  
allocated by IfA Director to IfA scientists/students

170

question 2) over-subscription

2.0 to 3.0

question 3) TSIP nights to be made available

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Cheers, Rolf

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!Rolf Peter Kudritzki !  
!Institute for Astronomy email: [kud@ifa.hawaii.edu](mailto:kud@ifa.hawaii.edu) !  
!University of Hawaii at Manoa phone: 808-956-8566 !  
!2680 Woodlawn Drive fax : 808-946-3467 !  
!Honolulu, Hawaii 96822 <http://www.ifa.hawaii.edu/users/kud> !  
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Dear David and Larry,

After consulting with Larry, I am providing the following brief response to your ALTAIR questionnaire.

1. The HET is scheduled 365 nights per year. Each of the fine HET partners runs its own TAC for its share of the HET.

I guess the total user base is 30-50.

2. The over-subscription rate is estimated to be about 1.5.

3. The present HET agreement expires in 2011. Discussions about a new agreement are just beginning.

The present partners were consulted about a year ago about selling telescope time. Selling time at cost was not then an attractive option for the HET Board. My impression is that the incentive factor will need to exceed two before interest is aroused.

David

At 12:56 PM 11/3/2008, you wrote:

Dear ACCORD colleagues,

Just a reminder that input received by the 10th of this month would have the greatest impact on the deliberations at the next ALTAIR meeting.

Best regards,

dave

On Oct 16, 2008, at 15:53 , David Silva wrote: