



Sarah Brough and Committee

# A Report on the First Meeting of the Users' Committee for Gemini

*The newly formed Users' Committee for Gemini held its first regular meeting in La Serena, Chile, on October 18-19, 2012. The meeting featured the review of an international survey of Gemini users; identifying as a key issue the need for better communication between our users and observatory staff.*

The recently established Users' Committee for Gemini (UCG) represents the body of Gemini users, both scientifically and geographically. Its initial members are Mike Gladders (Chair; University of Chicago, USA), Vicky Alonso (Observatorio Astronómico de Córdoba, Argentina), Sarah Brough (Australian Astronomical Observatory, Australia), Eduardo Cypriano (Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil), Craig Heinke (University of Alberta, Canada), Armin Rest (Space Telescope Science Institute, USA), Tom Richtler (Universidad de Concepción, Chile), and Stuart Ryder (ex-officio; Gemini Operations Working Group Chair). The Committee has been tasked with providing advice to Gemini on areas affecting users of the Observatory, excepting the strategic decisions covered by its newly formed Science & Technology Advisory Committee (STAC).

On October 18-19, 2012, the eight members (including the author) of the newly formed UCG traveled to La Serena, Chile, for its first formal meeting. We began by visiting the Gemini South telescope and watching the nightly operations. This very valuable exercise allowed us to understand how Gemini's queue observations work, and the Committee recommends that anyone who has this opportunity take advantage of it (see the June 2012 issue of *GeminiFocus*, pages 39-40). For anyone who does make the trip, we also note that the view was amazing, the telescope stunning, and the living quarters very comfortable.



Prior to the meeting we sent a survey to our international user community to capture the main issues they face with Gemini and were very pleased to receive 180 responses. We assessed these responses during the meeting and began forming a picture of which issues caused the most concern for users. A discussion followed with Observatory and National Gemini Office staff where one of the major issues became readily apparent: Gemini has not communicated effectively with its user community, because many of the specific issues the users raised had already been solved. This is great news for the user community, but flags an important communication issue between users and the Observatory that needs to be addressed.

The Committee distilled the users' input and our experience at the telescope into a report listing a series of issues that the community experiences and specific recommendations for the Observatory to address. There were also a number of areas in which the Committee wanted to commend the Observatory for its efforts in addressing user needs.

This report has been delivered to the Director of the Observatory for his response and will be available on the Gemini website.

If you would like to share thoughts on this document, or the Observatory in general, please feel free to contact any member of the UCG listed below.

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The Committee also would like to thank the Gemini Observatory for supporting every aspect of their visit.

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