

SUMMARY OF THE REPORT OF THE GTC USERS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT THE CALP, LA PALMA, 26 FEB 2010

1. The GUC Mission

The Users Committee of the GTC, GUC, is an advisory body to the GTC Director. It provides the user's perspective and advice on the normal scientific operation and development of the GTC, and recommends changes and improvements to both instrumentation and procedures in order to maximize scientific productivity. The GUC will act as an interface between the GTC users and the GTC. The current goal is to maximize productivity and make the GTC a valuable and productive community resource.

This is a summary of the report submitted to the GTC Director (P. Alvarez) on 15/04/2010.

2. Summary of GUC Perspectives and Recommendations

The GUC thanks the GTC Director, all the GTC staff and the GTC instrument teams for their reports on the status of the telescope, its various subsystems, and the instruments

The GUC commends the GTC staff for bringing into operation a facility that has enormous potential for scientific discovery. Many things have been accomplished, and the GTC shows excellent performance in many areas, such as the seeing-limited image quality in the visible, and robust pointing and tracking.

The dark current problem with OSIRIS has been brought within specifications by the new cryostat, although it is not entirely under control. The GUC was pleased that progress continues on FRIDA and CIRCE and that plans have been announced for future instruments. The GUC is also impressed with the expertise and dedication of the GTC personnel. By all early indications, they are moving the GTC forward so that it will indeed meet the community's expectations.

However, the GUC has noted that several problems persist and need urgent attention. The **main concerns of the GUC** can be summarized as follows.

1. The GTC continues to be significantly behind schedule, thus depriving the GTC user community with this major scientific resource. Among the delays are achievement of full operation of the dome and M1 phasing. Two other examples are the late implementation of folded-Cassegrain focal stations, which would likely lead to a logistical conflict of CanariCam and CIRCE at Nasmyth A, and a full realization of the observatory control system.

2. The lack of availability of some of the modes of OSIRIS (MOS and the blue TF) for the foreseeable future continues to be a problem. At its website, the GTC staff should more carefully and thoroughly keep the community informed of the performance status of OSIRIS (and, in the future, the other instruments), including an accurate appraisal of the availability of various modes.

3. The GUC is worried that further delays in the commissioning of CanariCam would reduce to unacceptable levels the window of opportunity before the launch of JWST, which will “take over” significant parts of CanariCam’s discovery space.

4. The GUC is very concerned about the slow progress with EMIR. No concrete schedule was offered for the delivery and commissioning of this instrument.

5. The GUC is very concerned about the low observing efficiency and the relatively slow progress achieved in order to improve this key aspect of the GTC operation.

Finally, a number of **immediate actions** were identified. The reasons for the substantial delay in the full operation of the GTC telescope are not entirely clear to the GUC, but the GUC feels that the GTC staff, particularly management at the highest levels, must proceed with a greater sense of urgency. Additionally:

- GTC science operations: achieve a better communication between the GTC and PIs of accepted proposals that have not been fully completed during the semester; the PIs being given a full update of the data status and all necessary information.
- GTC directorate: actions to clarify, with IAC and the rest of the institutions, the current situation of EMIR and to advocate for a full support to this instrument that will permit an accurate and acceptable development schedule to be implemented.
- GTC staff: continue and improve the communication channels to keep the community fully informed of the performance and status of OSIRIS (and in the future all the available instruments).
- GTC science staff: make public at the GTC web site a variety of examples of key data gathered in the different observing and engineering modes, in order to illustrate accurately the present performance of the GTC.
- GUC: introduce this committee and its mission within the three astronomical communities (Spain, Florida, Mexico) and enhance all necessary channels of communication with them.

In the **longer term**, the GUC suggests several procedures that may help the GTC serve the community better. One is to have at least some observing time in the classical, rather than queue, mode. That will help the GTC staff learn more quickly to meet the needs of the community, and it will give the community—not all of whom are experienced observers—an appreciation for the GTC observing environment, which will help them produce better proposals. Another is to make more open time available by not only working very diligently to improve operational efficiency, but also by spreading instrument-team payback time out over a longer period of time than currently required.

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