DRAFT Minutes

Meeting of Gemini Operations Working Group (5th Meeting)

August 11-12, 2003 – La Serena, Chile, Gemini BF, Conference Room

Participants: T. Armandroff, W. Couch, D. Crabtree, M. Faundez-Abans, I. Hook, S. Lopez, P. Puxley, J.R. Roy, R. Wainscoat

Action Items:

Action item: Puxley to distribute the 2002B spreadsheet of time allocation and usage to the NGOs.

Action item: Gemini should separate the North and South time accounting so that Host time is reported as previously agreed. Also, adding a column giving the partner identification of each program would be very helpful.

Action item: Couch will consult the GSC on the Operations Working Group recommendation on rollover.

Action item: Armandroff to ensure that the NOAO backend creators have number stamping in place in the backend by the 2004A proposal deadlines.

Action item: Each NGO should provide a Tier-1 GSA support person to Colin Aspin at Gemini.

Action item: Gemini to e-mail NGOs on Joint Proposal titles and principal contacts for the new internal Web page showing joint proposal information. NGOs will provide this information and check principal contact consistency.

Action item: Gemini to send preliminary list of ITAC-approved programs to the NGOs as soon after ITAC as possible. This should indicate which NGO is responsible for each proposal.

Action item: Puxley to circulate the Observing Tool work list for comments from Operations Working Group members on priorities.

Action item: The NGOs will investigate the possibility of scheduling their NTAC meetings so that NGOs can transmit their proposal packages to Gemini by November 7 and May 7 of each year.

Action item: Gemini instrument scientists to set up refresher training during the last two

weeks of November

Action item: Gemini will initiate bi-monthly telecons between Gemini and the NGOs.
Resolutions:

Resolution #1:

The Operations Working Group discussed the amount of time devoted to large, multi-partner proposals. This was partially motivated by Gemini Board Resolution 2003.A.14. The Working Group notes that there are several large multi-partner programs with ambitious scientific goals in the Queues for semesters 2003A and, especially, 2003B. For example, the percent of time in Band 1 that is dedicated to Joint Proposals in 2003B is 51% for Gemini North and 60% for Gemini South. Thus, large multi-partner proposals are clearly being supported by the NTACs and ITAC. We perceive that ITAC is playing an important role in enabling these large multi-partner programs. The Operations Working Group supports a balance between large multi-partner programs and smaller programs. Such a balance is present in the Queue for semester 2003B.

Resolution #2:

The Operations Working Group commends the Gemini software staff who have worked on implementation of the Observing Database and the display of Observing Database status on the Gemini Web pages. We believe that the Observing Database and these enhanced Web pages will strongly assist the NGOs and PIs in tracking Phase-II and observing status.

Resolution #3

The Operations Working Group recommends that the GSC endorses the Gemini proposal for carryover of SRB 1 programs with a few modifications. We suggest that the proposal be clarified to indicate that programs will be carried over for two consecutive semesters. The carryover of SRB 1 programs does not lessen the pressure on Gemini to complete SRB 1 programs in the semester they are first scheduled. Carryover should be restricted to queue programs. Carryover rules will apply in the case of instrument failure. It is recognized that ITAC members retain the right to recommend the removal of programs from the queue.

Resolution #4 (Agreed to by e-mail during September)

The OpsWG, representing the Gemini partnership, is very disappointed to learn of PPARC's decision to transfer MICHELLE back to UKIRT in semester 2004A. The OpsWG recognizes that this was a difficult decision involving many factors. However, the announcement of the decision at such a late date, and with little discussion with Gemini, has created difficulty in finalizing the Gemini call for proposals in 2004A. More importantly the

OpsWG feels that without MICHELLE on Gemini in semester 2004A, a significant science opportunity for the Gemini community to obtain early follow up SIRTF sources will be missed.

The OpsWG encourages Gemini to negotiate the date of the move of MICHELLE to UKIRT and its return to Gemini such that the Gemini community gains the maximum science return from MICHELLE in the early SIRTF era. We consider semesters 2004A, 2004B, and 2005A to be important periods for early SIRTF-based studies.

Resolution #5:

The OpsWG appreciates the new capabilities and features that are added to the OT each semester. However, we urge Gemini to release the OT on the scheduled date of Dec. 1 for 2004A, even if some desirable features are delayed until the next semester.

Resolution #6:

The OpsWG agreed on the following Phase II deadlines for Semester 2004A:
Early deadlines - PI January 12; NGO: January 22
Later deadlines - PI February 10; NGO: February 21

Resolution # 7:

The OpsWG recognizes the extensive effort by the Gemini staff over the past several years in commissioning instruments to provide forefront science capabilities for the Gemini partnership. The constant changes to Gemini systems required by the new capabilities have also had an impact on the stability of the Gemini telescopes.

In order to allow the Gemini Observatory to exploit the extant capabilities and engineering effort we are recommending that the science time on Gemini North be increased to approximately 80%. The specific recommendation is for 144 nights of science time using the instrumentation capabilities presented to the OpsWG by Gemini. This leaves 38 nights for commissioning and engineering in 2004A on Gemini North. The Gemini Science Committee will need to prioritize commissioning activities during its upcoming meeting.

The planning for semester 2004A was discussed extensively by the OpsWG using the baseline schedules presented by Gemini. The OpsWG recommends approval of the science, commissioning and engineering plan for Gemini South as presented. This will increase the science time on Gemini South to 70%

Minutes of the 4th Meeting:

The minutes of the February Operations Working Group were distributed before this meeting. In general, the minutes were approved, but several minor errors and clarifications need to be addressed before the minutes are distributed to the Board and the GSC.

Review of actions items: Action items #1 and #2 were essentially fulfilled. Action #3 on communications did not receive much attention. Action item #4 on the Joint Implementation Plan was done. Action item #5 on classical accommodation was not done uniformly.

In reviewing the Gemini Board resolutions from the May 2003 meeting, resolution 2003.A.8 on percent science time, 2003.A.10 on the Joint Implementation Plan, 2003.A.7 on classical and queue breakdown deliberations, and 2003.A.14 on Joint Proposals are relevant to the Operations Working Group.

An agenda item on observing model queue vs classical was added after discussion of 2004A.

In the discussion on Board Resolution A.14 Armandroff thought things went better at ITAC and that large programs were handled pretty well. The possibility of a single Gemini TAC was raised earlier and was not supported by NGOs/NTACs. Armandroff suggested an analysis of the time allocation process and handling of large proposals. Puxley noted that such an analysis of would be important for the process of joint proposals. Roy feels that a good number of large programs are making it to the telescope and Gemini is achieving a good balance between large and smaller programs. The discussion led to the Resolution #1 (see above).

Semester 2002B Science Operations

Puxley reviewed the time accounting and highlights for semester 2002B. We noted that the NIRI failure, due to the bushings, negatively impacted the Northern queue completion. In the South, Puxley scheduled additional science nights in order to ameliorate the poor weather experienced. In particular, success was achieved in completing many Phoenix programs (with excellent image quality). However, T-ReCS non-availability and the lack of Acquisition Camera triggers negatively impacted scientific productivity.

Overall there was a 70% conversion of scheduled science time to charged time; mostly weather loss plus instrument problems. Operations highlights on GN include the successful Gemini Deep-Deep Survey program and the Altair/NIRI commissioning. The highlights on GS include Flamingos MOS demonstration science; CIRPASS commissioning and

demonstration science and the very successful Phoenix runs.

The Board approves the time accounting for a given semester. Board-mandated rules are used for the calculation. One of these rules indicates that classical charges include the weather loss, while Queue charges do not include the weather loss. Wainscoat indicated that the asymmetry in how classical and queue are charged may be unfair to certain partners (but this is a Board issue).

Semester 2003A Science Operations

Puxley reviewed semester 2003A status as of 14 July 2003. In the North, about 60% of the time allocated to science resulted in chargeable time. The loss is a sum of weather loss, telescope failure, and instrument failure. The Operations Working Group would like to understand the losses better in order to explain these losses to our communities. In the North, the Queue completion statistics trend properly as a function of band, as desired. The cancellation of the Michelle Queue occurred in 2003A; this is excluded from the completion statistics. GMOS-North performed with high reliability in 2003A. NIRI operated during all of its 2003A scheduled runs, but spectroscopy was not performed during the second half of the semester due to the failure of the grism wheel. In the South, most of the science time was dedicated to Phoenix, with some CIRPASS. Commissioning of GMOS-South, in its most popular modes, was started and completed. GMOS-South commissioning revealed some low-level imaging problems that were traced to the edge of M2; these have been masked by a 1-cm baffle. T-ReCS commissioning was started, but it has been impacted by poor weather. T-ReCS imaging commissioning has progressed well, and T-ReCS imaging System Verification will begin in September. Some progress has been made on T-ReCS spectroscopic commissioning. M1 was recoated on Gemini South. This was the first coating stripping at Cerro Pachon. The thermal emissivity of M1+M2, as measured by T-ReCS, is 3.8%.

Queue Issues

The rollover of Science Ranking Band 1 proposals was discussed. This issue was also raised at ITAC which had a helpful discussion. ITAC asked for a proposed implementation plan from Gemini. The goal is to increase the likelihood of completing Band-1 programs. The proposed implementation plan is as follows. At the ITAC meeting, when a Band-1 program is approved, it will be labeled as rollover eligible or ineligible by the ITAC member. For joint proposals there would be a single recommendation on rollover status. After the decision at ITAC, rollover would be automatic. A limit on rollover duration would be 2 semesters. Simulations by Puxley suggest that about 10% of Band-1 would be occupied by rollover. The proposal is to announce the policy on rollover of 2004A Band-1 programs in the 2004A Call for Proposals.

The Working Group discussed the ability of the ITAC representative to pull a rolled-over

program in extreme circumstances. The Working Group believes this policy applies only to queue mode and not classical.

The Operations Working Group strongly desires more frequent updates to the Queue Status Web page. Since the Observing Database is now in place, software effort is underway to display the public portions of database status on the Gemini Web pages. The first output Web page gives the nightly execution status (which contains the caveat of containing programs tried during that night). The second page contains each observing program, with status on an observation-by-observation basis. It will allow the NGOs and PIs to track Phase-II status, checking, activation, and being observed. It will be updated approximately every 4 hours.

Puxley then reviewed semester 2003B thus far. Requests for GMOS-North dropped, but were replaced by an increase in demand for GMOS-South. The number of Michelle proposals was modest, which is disappointing. For most countries, the oversubscription at Gemini South for 2003B has increased significantly from 2003A. This increase in interest results from the new availability of GMOS-South and T-ReCS. There was a lengthy discussion of the fact that the Queue oversubscription is really an underestimate because it does not include weather loss.

Jean-Rene Roy pointed out that U. Hawaii is creating mini-blocks of classical observing by putting together 3 1-night classical proposals with the same instrument. On these Hawaii intervals, one observer is charged with being present for the entire run and is the primary interface to Gemini. Armandroff and Crabtree indicated that they would be interested in assembling U.S./Canadian sub-3-night-minimum proposals that prefer classical into modest classical blocks. The community will need to be informed of this opportunity so that they can indicate their preferences, and there will be the challenge of finding programs with similar instrumental modes and R.A. ranges.

Instrumentation Status

Doug Simons presented an update on Instrumentation status via Videocon from Hilo.

NIRI: Significant repairs have been completed on NIRI, including repairing the pupil wheel, the pupil imaging mechanism, science detector focus stage, and environmental cover. The repair left the f/32 camera misaligned, which significantly affects NIRI spectroscopy (but not imaging). Gemini has made progress on reducing NIRI detector noise.

GMOS-North: This instrument is working well. New gratings have been received.

ALTAIR: ALTAIR System Verification is planned for Semester 2003B. The first attempt to use GMOS-N with ALTAIR has occurred, but there are some interface issues that

require attention. Gemini hopes to fix the vibration problem with the NIRI cryo-coolers, which represents the bulk of residual Strehl degradation in ALTAIR.

MICHELLE: MICHELLE underwent surgery since the last report to realign the pupil, remove detector vignetting, and investigate detector thermal issues. More rework is scheduled for the next two weeks. No progress has yet been made on reaching our goals on detector vignetting or pupil alignment. No MICHELLE spectra have been taken at Gemini because of a non-functional MICHELLE mechanism. There does appear to be a signal-to-noise disappointment in the instrument, probably due to excess noise. On the positive side, diffraction-limited imaging performance has been achieved in each filter. A low-transmission filter is being used in order to not saturate in the N band. A more elegant solution is a ways off. In addition, there are substantial observing overheads presently. The overheads have the potential for improvement with significant effort. Also, the MICHELLE detector is running several degrees warmer than that of T-ReCS. This is an issue for excess dark current.

Gemini is working on an agreement with PPARC to arrange for permanent loan of MICHELLE to Gemini. The U.K. would gain 20 nights of guaranteed time. This is not approved or signed, so there is some risk of MICHELLE going back to UKIRT in 2004. MICHELLE remains an "orphan instrument" in terms of support. Simons hopes to enhance the support issue once Gemini receives the permanent loan of MICHELLE by using Gemini staff and contracting back to ATC. Both Hook and Armandroff indicated that there is a perception problem in our communities from the belief that MICHELLE was used by visiting observers on UKIRT but has not been used for science on Gemini. (Note: In late August PPARC decided to move Michelle to UKIRT for Semester 2004A. This was a great disappointment to the Gemini community. The Operations Working Group developed a resolution on this matter - #4 above)

GMOS-South: Simons expects the GMOS-South IFU by the end of the year. The work for the retrofit of the GMOS-South CCDs by Lincoln Labs CCDs, post-processed by Mike Lesser, is underway. Lesser will give the CCDs a "red" coating. A CCD temperature control problem will be repaired during this work. There are a number of steps that need to occur for this retrofit to happen by October. With the different CCD QE curves, the integration-time calculator will need to be revised for GMOS-South. Then, 2003B GMOS-South users will need to revise integration times in the Observing Tool.

T-ReCS: The bulk of the imaging-mode commissioning has been done. Much of the current effort relates to advanced integration issues. For example, current issues include running more complex sets of chops/nods through the sequencer and developing target/slit-centering techniques. Armandroff asked if Gemini is confident that T-ReCS has advanced sufficiently to perform the imaging programs in the 2003B Queue once SV is done. Simons and Puxley replied that we are in reasonably good shape for the imaging programs.

bHROS: Integration of the stand-alone bHROS is complete. The fiber assembly is nearing delivery. Puxley and Simons are attempting to devise a plan to measure a simple end-to-end throughput of bHROS. They seek to attempt this in a manner that follows the GSC commissioning priorities (GMOS-South, T-ReCS and GNIRS all deemed higher priority than bHROS).

GNIRS: GNIRS acceptance testing is underway at NOAO in Tucson. The low-level light leaks have been fixed, measured flexure is acceptable, and the Team has demonstrated very low noise on the GNIRS ALADDIN array. Pending a successful acceptance test, GNIRS should reach Cerro Pachon in early September. Given that only a small amount of GNIRS testing will be possible in 2003B (given commitments to GMOS-South and T-ReCS), Gemini does not favor offering GNIRS for 2004A. We discussed how to perform enough GNIRS testing and commissioning in 2003B such that the Operations Working Group will have sufficient information at its February 2004 meeting to hopefully offer GNIRS in semester 2004B.

Hokupaa-85: Simons showed images of an integrated Hokupaa-85 instrument. It is not yet ready for acceptance testing. One of the issues is obtaining a deformable mirror (DM) that meets all the performance requirements. The University of Hawaii has several developmental DMs in progress. These will be tested for use in Hokupaa-85 or NICI. The GSC will discuss the priority of Hokupaa-85 commissioning compared to the other instruments in commissioning.

Flamingos-2: The Flamingos-2 CDR will take place August 20-21 in Gainesville, Florida.

GSAOI: The GSAOI CDR will take place in October in Canberra, Australia.

Partner Perspectives on Phase I

US

The NOAO Gemini Science Center (NGSC) saw an enthusiastic response from the U.S. community to the Gemini Call for Proposals for 2003B. For Gemini North in 2003B, 60 proposals were received: 28 for GMOS-North, 21 for NIRI, and 13 for Michelle. Fifty-two U.S. proposals requested Gemini South: 18 for T-ReCS, 17 for GMOS-South, 15 for Phoenix, and 2 for the Acquisition Camera. In total, 107 U.S. Gemini proposals sought 215 nights on the two Gemini telescopes. The resulting oversubscription factors (not allowing for any weather or other losses) are 2.6 for Gemini North and 2.7 for Gemini South.

The NOAO Telescope Time Allocation Committee (TAC) reviewed the proposals, and the NGSC Staff performed technical assessments. The 65 most highly ranked proposals were forwarded to Gemini for ITAC.

Two forwarded U.S. proposals requested classical observing and were scheduled in this mode. Both were for NIRI use and met the 3-night minimum for classical mode.

One approved U.S. program that requested Michelle was switched to T-ReCS after the announcement that Michelle would not be available before November in 2003B due to commissioning issues. This announcement of changes in Michelle availability relative to the Call for Proposals occurred on May 28. An earlier announcement to the NGOs of the Michelle unavailability, preferably before the national TAC meetings or significantly before the forward-to-Gemini deadline before ITAC, would have aided our efforts to respond to this difficult situation. If we had known of the Michelle unavailability sooner, we would have had more time to investigate T-ReCS suitability for some Michelle programs, and we likely would have changed our forwarded programs at the margins. We urge Gemini to please alert the NGOs as soon as possible in such future situations, keeping the national TAC meeting dates in mind.

UK

The number of proposals received at the 2003B deadline (March 31st 2003) was approximately the same as last semester. However the number of hours requested per proposal has increased, particularly on Gemini-South, so that the oversubscription rate has stayed roughly constant despite a more than 50% increase in the amount of science time available on Gemini-S. The table below summarises the statistics.

Gemini-N	**Number**	**Hours**	**Hours (corrected)**				
GMOS-N	19	393	411	Michelle	8	94	100
NIRI	12	220	233	*total*	*39*	*707*	*744*

Over-subscription=3.5(uncorrected) 3.6 (corrected)

Gemini-S							
GMOS-S	13	275	337	Phoenix	3	18	18
AcqCam	1	10	10	T-ReCS	5	77	117
total	*22*	*380*	*482*				

Over-subscription=1.8(uncorrected) 2.3(corrected)

In total 56 proposals were received for 2003B, of which 5 requested 2 instruments

UK time available in 2003B is 205 hours (Gemini-N) and 209 hours (Gemini-S).

"Corrected" hours include overheads, which are still significantly underestimated in phase-I proposals.

For comparison, in 2003A 58 proposals were received. The hours available to the UK in 2003A were 197hrs (Gemini-N) and 131hrs (Gemini-S), and the oversubscription factor were 3.6 (North) and 1.6 (South) after correction for overheads.

The UK NTAC sent 31 proposals to Gemini. Of these 25 were subsequently included in the queue. The remainder were not queued because of observing condition constraints.

Phase-I issues

The new PIT backend software had a bug so that it did not include the proposal numbers on the front page. This was fixed with a script provided at very short notice by NOAO. The fix should be incorporated into the next release of the backend.
There was a problem with guide-star selection from the ESO guide star catalogue (now fixed?).
The GMOS guide-star checking algorithm in PIT is not correct (it assumes a circular patrol region). This is misleading and not consistent with the OT.

Canada

The number of proposals submitted for 2003B was good but as the average time requested per proposal was only 13.3 hours the oversubscription rates are on the low side. As expected GMOS was the most popular instrument (North and South), accounting for 2/3 of the proposals. Overheads were slightly underestimated on average so the real subscription rates are a a bit higher.

Canada uses two TACs. One evaluates both CFHT and Gemini proposals and the other JCMT proposals. Both TACs were asked to consider the idea of a merged TAC that would evaluate proposals for all of Canada's offshore facilities. Neither TAC supported a move in this direction at this time.

We had the same problem as everyone else regarding the backend not putting the proposal number in the xml file. NOAO provided a speedy work around!

Number of Proposals

	Instrument							Telescope
AcqCam	GMOS	Michelle		NIRI	Phoenix	T-ReCS		Grand Total
	GN	15	2	5		22		GS 2
6		3	2	13	Grand Total	2		21 2
5	3	2	35	**Amount of Time**				

	Instrument							
Telescope	AcqCam	GMOS	Michelle	NIRI	Phoenix	T-ReCS		
Grand Total	Subs Rate		GN	251.48	18.33	69.68		
339.49	2.63	GS	14.5	68.61		33.65	10.9	127.66 1.06
	Grand Total		14.5	320.09	18.33	69.68	33.65	10.9 467.15 1.87

Australia

Australia had a much better response to the 2003B round, with the number of proposals being up by a factor of 2 on the number received for 2003A. This returned us back to the levels experienced in 2002A and 2002B. There was much stronger demand for time on Gemini-South, mainly as a result of GMOS-S being available for the first time.

A total of 10 proposals were received for Gemini-North, 6 of which were for GMOS-N, 2 for NIRI and 2 for Michelle. These oversubscribed the time available by a factor of 2.1. For Gemini-South, 10 proposals were also received, 8 of these being for GMOS-S(!!), and 1 for each of Phoenix and T-ReCS. These oversubscribed the time available by a factor of 2.4. A third of the proposals received were "joint" proposals, involving partnership-wide collaborations with requests going to a number of other NTACs.

The proposal submission and evaluation process is now well bedded down and appears to run smoothly. Furthermore, the firewall and proxy server problems experienced at Sydney and Swinburne Universities have now been solved and users at these institutions no longer have troubles in accessing the guide star catalogues and submitting their proposals (to the AAO). The only problem experienced with the PIT is that the backend receival software no longer 'stamps' proposals with a sequentially increasing identity number (e.g., G/03B/**) as they are received. It is hoped that the Gemini Observatory can remedy this problem for the 2004A round.

Chile

Time requested GMOS-S: 145.02 h (7 proposals)
Time requested Te-ReCS: 59.80 h (3 proposals)

Total 204.82 h or subscription factor of 2.4

There was one joint proposal (Chile-Brazil-Gemini).
There were two helpdesk queries.

NTAC

The proposals were reviewed for their technical feasibility and then sent to the TAC members. Technical part of proposals in general well-written. Three G-MOS and 1 T-ReCS proposals were awarded time. One T-ReCS proposal below cutoff also sent to ITAC. ITAC detected 1 duplicate proposal.

Brazil

Here are the final Brazilian 2003B Gemini request statistics. The number of proposals is larger than in semester 2003A , with a total of 21 submissions.

Proposal Summary

Gemini-N

Number of applications 9

Requested time 38.87 hours
Pressure factor 1.77

GMOS: 6 proposals requesting 22.22 hrs
NIRI: 3 proposals requesting 16.65 hrs

Gemini-S

Number of applications 14
Requested time 88.39 hours
Pressure factor 4.42

GMOS-S: 9 proposals requesting 37.54 hrs
Phoenix: 3 proposals requesting 43.12 hrs
T-ReCS: 2 proposals requesting 7.73 hrs

There were three joint proposals involving requests to other partner TACs.

University of Hawaii

UH does not use PIT for proposals. The TAC reviews proposals in a different format.

Only successful applicants have to use PIT to produce proposals for Gemini. PIT is usually completed via cut and paste. In one case, NGO staff had to complete the Phase I proposals because applicant was away on travel.

11 proposals: 6 GMOS 4 NIRI 1 Michelle
5 queue 6 classical
65 hours queue 12 nights classical

UH regards 1 queue night as 7 hours observing - figures in weather

This equates to oversubscription of 21.3/10=2.13

Phase II Discussion

Brazil: Phase II is going well. Brazil appreciates the new Observing Tool software.

Chile: Lopez raised the issue of Gemini Staff contacting Chilean PIs. There appears to be some bypassing of the NGOs in contact between the Gemini Contact Scientist and the P.I.

Hawaii: Hawaii has gotten the Observing Tool working with Apple OS10, allowing Wainscoat to review Phase-II's on his laptop. Convincing some Band-4 P.I.s to perform

Phase II can be difficult. Some proposers are choosing guide stars poorly with GMOS.

Australia: Australia likes the ODB and the automated e-mail system. It has taken some effort to get used to the new system, particularly in the awkward phase before the automatic e-mail system commenced. Australia would benefit from a Gemini-provided training session. Australia was confused by the policy change for requiring GMOS calibration observations in the Phase-II.

Canada: All Canadian PIs needed iteration with NGO staff before achieving a successful Phase II. Crabtree suggested adding more example observations in the Phase II Tool that can be cut/pasted. Also, better support of GMOS parallactic-angle observations in the OT would be useful. The need to specify all calibration observations for GMOS was not advertised adequately to the NGOs.

U.K.: There were some instances of Gemini staff not copying the U.K. NGO contact scientist on e-mail to PIs. There was confusion about the U.K. NGO not receiving two proposals for which the U.K. PI had specified that s/he is the international contact. Again, lack of guidance on the policy change for GMOS calibrations was problematic. Hook asked for a way to specify blind offsets in the OT.

U.S.: The NGSC Staff appreciated the availability of the new Observing Database. The U.S. seeks more frequent updates on the Gemini Queue status pages, and this will be addressed by the planned enhancements reported at this meeting by Puxley. The U.S. was also affected by the lack of information on the policy change on specifying GMOS calibrations in the OT. The U.S. seeks earlier release of the Observing Tool, by the ITAC meeting date. Most initial Phase-II submissions are found to require further work by the P.I. after initial NGO checking. This renders the 1-week window, between the deadline advertised to PIs and the deadline for NGO forwarding to Gemini very difficult. NGSC Staff recommend that the Observing Tool contain a self-checking capability. A check button could be added that would perform, for example, checks of the targets in the Phase I vs. Phase II proposals, checks of the observing conditions granted vs. those contained in the Phase II, and other straightforward mechanical checks. NGSC Staff also recommend that the Observing Tool contain a mechanism to select ranges of observations for updating status to "for activation" or otherwise. For programs with large numbers of targets, the current process is very labor intensive.

Gemini Science Archive

Colin Aspin joined us by Videocon to discuss the Gemini Science Archive (GSA). Data will eventually be distributed to PIs by the GSA at HIA-CADC, instead of the present CDs. This will likely begin near the end of 2003. PIs will then have the opportunity to download their data more rapidly, and with greater frequency over the semester, than

currently allowed by CD distribution.

Gemini Perspective

Puxley reported on Phase-I issues from the Gemini perspective. It is important to not forward proposals that have unused resources in the XML. Approximately 15% of forwarded proposals included two telescopes or unused targets. This complicates and delays pre-ITAC merging, drafting of the semesterschedule. The NTACs/NGOs need to continue to work to achieve better balance over observing conditions. During merging, it is not uncommon for programs to be rejected because of imbalance. The primary problems in 2003B were cloud cover (both Gemini North and South) and sky brightness (Gemini South). Continued efforts on community education would be beneficial.

Puxley also informed us of a problem in the right ascension distribution. The programs at Gemini South were strongly peaked at an RA of 3 hours. The Working Group felt that the analysis of the target distribution over the semester needs to be done on a target-by-target basis. Calculating the visibility function of each target, then looking at visibility in aggregate over the semester, is needed to truly understand the situation.

2003B was the first semester where we are soliciting a principal international contact for completing the Phase II. In most cases, all components of the Joint Proposal specified the same contact. However, there were some cases of conflicts in contact name. These had to be worked out at ITAC. Gemini is willing to host a Web site where partners can deposit the Title and P.I. of Joint Proposals early in the Phase-I process. This will allow a check of whether the principal contact matches between partners on Joint Proposals.

Puxley then reviewed the timeline for Gemini Phase I and II. The timeline is highly compressed in order to make the system as responsive as possible. Hook indicated that knowing the draft list of proposals from ITAC as early as possible allows us to assign national contacts. Caveat: this will not be fully approved.

All agreed that the December 1 ITAC date for 2004A helps to streamline the time allocation process. It is planned to release the Observing Tool by the ITAC meeting, and then load the database the week after ITAC. Ops Working Group members felt strongly that releasing the Observing Tool by ITAC is more important than adding the additional features that would result from a week or two of additional development time.

We then discussed the Joint Implementation Plan (JIP). The JIP was discussed at the May Board meeting. The Board made three modest modifications to the draft JIP. The Board also identified a person to sign the JIP for each Gemini partner. There is still concern among the Operations Working Group that the list of Gemini responsibilities is not balanced relative to the long list of NGO responsibilities. There is also an issue with sunset clauses for some partners. It was agreed that: Crabtree will explore with Mountain the

deletion of the list of Gemini responsibilities in the document with a reference to the Gemini AURA contract; create a new document with these changes; and distribute the document to the proposed signers.

Armandroff presented ideas on training of NGO staff. Three types of training were discussed: refresher/update training on an instrument; new instrument or new support person training; and training for a modest new responsibility (e.g., GMOS mask making). Refresher/update training would seem best done on a per-instrument basis at some point each semester before the Phase-II's begin arriving. The two weeks before the ITAC meeting appear best for the schedules of Gemini staff. This refresher could be done as a Videocon between staff at Gemini and the NGOs supporting a specific instrument. Such a refresher in the two weeks before the ITAC meeting would be the optimal timing. Such a refresher could include: review of what went well and/or poorly in the previous semester's Phase-II; review new rules or procedures; describe new instrument functionality; followed by questions and the sharing of ideas. Training for a new instrument support person or a new instrument requires a visit by the NGO staff member to a Gemini site. We also discussed training for a new responsibility assumed by NGOs, such as GMOS mask making support. Written documentation followed by a Videocon is the suggested path here. Attention to training and communication should be considered a worthwhile investment in our Gemini-wide user support capability.

We then discussed the 2004A Call for Proposals. Armandroff suggested that we include the right ascension limits directly in the Call; they are currently in a link that proposers need to follow for enlightenment.

The Operations Working Group members are enthusiastic to offer Michelle spectroscopy and ALTAIR/NIRI imaging on Gemini North. The Operations Working Group also supports offering T-ReCS spectroscopy and the GMOS IFU on Gemini South. In general, the Operations Working Group endorses the draft list of instruments offered in 2004A by Gemini Observatory.

Gemini Science Meeting

The Operations Working Group is enthusiastic about the proposed Gemini Science Meeting in 2004. We see this as an excellent opportunity for a face-to-face meeting of NGO staff from the Gemini partnership.

NGO – Gemini Communications

The NGOs appreciated the distribution of the Altair commissioning report and look forward to the Michelle report. We agreed that any reports written by NGO staff when they visit Gemini be distributed to all the other NGOs as well. We also urge Gemini to consider establishing e-mail distribution lists for each instruments that include the appropriate NGO

staff.

Additional Business:

Isobel Hook was elected as the new Chair of the Operations Working Group. Her term is two years.

The next meeting of the Gemini Operations Working Group will take place on February 5 -6, 2004 in Hilo.

For future meetings, we plan to explore with the Gemini Board the possibility of holding one meeting per year at one of the two Gemini sites, and the other meeting at the headquarters of an NGO. This would promote better interchange between the Operations Working Group and the staffs of the NGOs.