

TMT modernizes UH Hilo physics and astronomy department with donation of 12 new Linux computers and data server system

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By Staff

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The gift from the Thirty Meter Telescope International Observatory totals over \$28,000 in equipment that will aid in promoting cutting edge physics and astronomy at UH Hilo, for both physics and astronomy programming and computational projects.

By Susan Enright.



Pierre Martin (right), associate professor of astronomy and observatory director, with students in the upgraded computer lab.



John Coney/UH Hilo Physics & Astronomy



John Coney/UH Hilo Physics & Astronomy

Students and researchers in the physics and astronomy program at University of Hawai'i at Hilo are celebrating the installation of 12 brand new high-end desktops and monitors, along with a new data processing and storage Linux computer system, thanks to a generous donation by the Thirty Meter Telescope International Observatory.

The Department of Physics and Astronomy held a dedication of the newly equipped lab at the start of the semester.



At the dedication of the new computer lab, faculty and students from the UH Hilo physics and astronomy program with TMT community liaison Sandra Dawson. (L-R) Associate Professor Kathy Cooksey, Associate Professor R. Pierre Martin, Instructor Dan O'Connor, student Kyle Steckler, TMT community liaison Sandra Dawson, Professor Marianne Takamiya, Assistant Professor Heather Kaluna, Cathy Ishida, and student Kenji Emerson. Aug. 27, 2018.

The TMT gift totals over \$28,000 in equipment, supporting the replacement of 10 aged computers purchased in 2010 that no longer met departments needs.

“Previous small hard drives and slow processors made for slow going,” explains John Coney, an educational specialist in the physics and astronomy department. “And with the age of the computers at eight years, we worried that they might start to fail.”

Sandra Dawson, TMT’s community outreach coordinator, says Coney sent her an email telling her that the UH Hilo physics and astronomy computer lab was out of date.

“He asked if TMT could help,” Dawson says. “We value this department and we understand the need for a good computer lab. I told John to tell us how much it would be to make it a functional lab. He gave us an estimate and my manager quickly approved.”

Coney says the new computers and the dual Xeon 12tb data processing server are probably the only dedicated Linux lab on campus. It is an operating system used by astronomy and physics scientists; the majority of the world uses Linux as a server operating system platform.

“The updated lab will aid in promoting cutting edge physics and astronomy at UH Hilo, both for physics and astronomy programming and computational projects,” Coney says. “The new computers provide more resources, in terms of disk storage, CPU processing, and memory. The larger monitors are useful in programming environments.”

A summer class, Software Systems for Astronomy taught by Al Conrad, an astronomer from the University of Arizona, is popular with international students for the past four years, will find the new equipment extremely beneficial.



Sandra Dawson, TMT community liaison, holds a plaque from the UH Hilo Department of Physics and Astronomy, thanking TMT for gift. Photo by John Coney, dedication of the upgraded computer lab, Aug 27, 2018.



Coney sends “a giant mahalo nui loa to Sandra Dawson and the Thirty Meter Telescope International Observatory for partnering with the UH Hilo physics and astronomy department in their support of higher education in Hawai’i.”

Dawson attended the dedication of the newly equipped lab.

“So happy we could help,” she says. “We look forward to many years of collaborating with UH Hilo.”

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