



AURA Appoints Dr. R. Chris Smith as Head of Mission in Chile

January 21, 2009..... Today William Smith, President of AURA, announced the appointment of Dr. R. Chris Smith as AURA Observatory Head of Mission in Chile. The Head of Mission is the primary representative in Chile for AURA and all units operating or wishing to operate on its property. These units include National Optical Astronomy Observatory (Cerro Tololo Inter-American Observatory), Gemini South, and Southern Observatory for Astronomical Research and such other observatory operations functioning under the auspices of AURA in Chile. He will also be responsible for all diplomatic matters and the point of contact with all Chilean governmental authorities, the Union and Chilean institutions.

Dr. Smith's appointment will begin March 2, 2009 for a period of three years, renewable thereafter. Smith will succeed Richard Malow who has acted in this capacity since March 2007.

Dr. Smith brings a wealth of experience to this position. Smith first joined CTIO as a postdoctoral fellow after earning a Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1991. He spent three years at CTIO, followed by three years at the University of Michigan as a McLaughlin Postdoctoral Fellow before returning to CTIO as a staff astronomer in 1998. He received a B.A. in astrophysics from Indiana University in 1986.

While an undergraduate at Indiana, he participated in NOAO summer student programs both at the National Solar Observatory in Sunspot in 1985 and at Kitt Peak National Observatory (KPNO) in Tucson in 1986. Following up on his interest in strong NOAO's student programs, he restarted the Research Experiences for Undergraduates program at CTIO, and established a similar opportunity for Chilean undergraduates, the *Práctica de Investigación en Astronomía* program.

In November 2008, Dr Smith was appointed Director of CTIO. He has also worked actively in establishing the basis for the future operation of the Large Synoptic Survey Telescope on Cerro Pachon. In so doing he has worked directly with the Chilean astronomy community and the LSST Board.

Dr. Smith has also collaborated with Gemini on a variety of common goals including the development of future concepts for data processing and analysis software.

