

BU Astronomers Take a Giant Step Forward

University invests \$10 million in state-of-the-art telescope

In a move that Andrew West likens to “going from reading by candlelight to reading by electric light,” BU astronomers will soon be able to view the heavens through the powerful Discovery Channel Telescope, now nearing completion at Lowell Observatory, near Flagstaff, Ariz.

West, a College of Arts & Sciences assistant professor of astronomy, studies the very faint stars that make up most of the universe, and the new apparatus, he says, will allow him to eye 14 times more of these stars than he did on the much smaller Perkins Telescope, also at Lowell Observatory, that BU has used since 1998.

The University contributed \$10 million of the \$53 million cost of the seven-story project in exchange for an agreement that grants BU astronomers use of the telescope for 45 nights each year.

“BU’s investment in this telescope is not only a major boost for our astronomy research and educational programs,” says Andrei Ruckenstein, a BU vice president and associate provost for research, “but it will greatly enhance the impact of our efforts in promoting the

Boston University has struck a deal to give researchers use of the new Discovery Channel Telescope in Arizona for 45 nights a year.

JOHN WILKENDORF OF LOWELL OBSERVATORY

understanding of science broadly, in schools, across our own student body, and with the public at large.”

Set in the mountains about 40 miles southeast of Flagstaff, the telescope is named for the Discovery Channel, which spearheaded its construction. Astronomers expect it will take several months to work the bugs out of the instrument’s software. The fifth-largest telescope of its kind in the continental United States, the Discovery Channel Telescope will be a vast improvement over the Perkins Telescope.

The new equipment will enable BU astronomers to see more than twice as far into the universe as they had seen and to view dim objects much more clearly.

Until now, BU’s astronomy department has been the only free-standing astronomy department at a major U.S. university without guaranteed access to a telescope of similar capability. University astronomers who required a bigger instrument than the Perkins had to vie for much-sought-after time at national facilities.

“It was clear that we as an astronomy department had a competitive disadvantage,” says James Jackson, a CAS astronomy profes-

sor and associate dean for research and outreach. “Telescopes are essentially our laboratories. We need them just as much as chemists and physicists need labs.”

Jackson says the new agreement will improve the chances that BU research projects will be funded by agencies such as NASA.

It will also help draw top faculty, a concern for the department as a good number of its professors near retirement age, according to Alan Marscher, a CAS professor of astronomy. “To attract the brightest young faculty you need a state-of-the-art telescope.”

The agreement with the Discovery Channel gives producers at the channel access to Boston University research and opens doors for faculty and students in the College of Communication Graduate Program in Science Journalism to produce documentary pieces about research at the telescope for the Discovery Channel.

Under the agreement, BU will pay the \$10 million in one-year installments over the next decade. Thereafter, the University will pay \$300,000 a year for use of the new telescope, as well as \$200,000 a year for continued use of the Perkins Telescope.

AMY SUTHERLAND

A Fraternity Comes Back to Life

Delta Lambda Phi welcomes gay, bisexual, and progressive men



CYDNEY SCOTT

Jonathan Dobres arrived at BU in 2001 hoping to make new friends; what he found, he says, was a whole new family. His new siblings were members of the recently founded Delta Lambda Phi, a social fraternity that welcomes gay, bisexual, and progressive members. The chapter thrived for a short time, then dwindled, and was dissolved in 2007.

Now, a decade after he first stepped on campus, Dobres (CAS’05, GRS’12) is back at the University as a graduate student. And so is Delta Lambda Phi.

By chance, Ethan Pravetz (SED’12, CAS’12), a biology and science education major, had Dobres as a teaching assistant freshman year and learned about DLP through its one-time fraternity president. Their conversations encouraged Pravetz to form an interest group, and by January 2011, DLP’s national board of directors had granted the first eight pledges colony status, the step before becoming a full chapter. Dobres is one of two mentors for the fraternity’s BU colony.

Delta Lambda Phi was founded in 1986 and now has 26 chapters and 6 colonies in the United States and Canada. Other than Delta Phi Upsilon, a Greek organization founded by gay men of color, it is the only nationwide fraternity for gay, bisexual, and progressive men.

“I think there’s a need for it in collegiate Greek life,” says Pravetz, DLP’s BU president and pledge educator. “All fraternities have antidiscrimination clauses in their bylaws. Everyone’s willing to say that they don’t discriminate, but we’re trying to be leaders against the de facto discrimination that might occur.”

Last fall, the group completed its first rush. Of the 18 students who rushed, 7 were accepted.

DLP dubs itself a social fraternity, but members raise money and do community service for organizations like the Greater Boston Food Bank, Rosie’s Place, and Fenway Health, where they answer a hotline for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people. LESLIE FRIDAY

↑ **THE DELTA LAMBDA PHI FAMILY:** (back row, from left) Arcangelo Cella (CAS’11, LAW’14), Marcos Villarreal (CAS’13), Elliot Cintron (SMG’13), Stephen Arredondo (CAS’13), Ethan Pravetz (SED’12, CAS’12); (front row, from left) Arty Mendoza (COM’11) (holding a cutout of Kent State University mentor Bryan Guffey), Jonathan Dobres (CAS’05, GRS’12), Andrew McDonough (CAS’11, GRS’13), David Mark Orr (CAS’12), and Tom Hall (ENG’12).