

Latin American Summer School: A Key Event for Future Astronomers

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More than 200 students gathered in December at ESO-Vitacura for the first multi-thematic Latin American Astronomy Summer School, organised jointly by ESO and the Chilean Astronomical Society (SOCHIAS).

From 8 to 10 December, enthusiastic students and young researchers from 18 different countries had the chance to review important front-line areas of research, presented by major players of those fields.

“Given the large interest in attendance, this summer school could possibly turn out to be one of those meetings of historical significance for the development of astronomy in South America”, commented Bob Williams (STScI, USA), one of the invited speakers, at the opening of the event.

Besides the large number of students from Chile, other countries well represented among the attendees were those from Latin America with longer traditions in astronomical research, such as Argentina, Mexico and Brazil. Even students from countries with incipient departments of astrophysics – such as Honduras or Guatemala – were also present at the conference. Finally, young researchers from Europe attended too, attracted by the series of powerful astronomical facilities operating in northern Chile.

In the first day of the event, Malcolm Longair (Cambridge University, UK) presented an overview of the history of 20th-century cosmology, complemented in the following days by talks on the most luminous radio galaxies, physics of galaxy formation and the cosmic microwave background.

Pat Osmer (Ohio State University, USA) offered a series of talks about quasars, while Dante Minniti (Pontificia Universidad Católica, Chile) described in detail present and future methods for the search for extrasolar planets as well as current models for planetary formation.



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Other speakers were Gloria Dubner (IAFE/CONICET, Argentina), Luis Felipe Rodríguez (UNAM, Mexico), Felix Mirabel (ESO, Chile) and Monica Rubio (SOCHIAS, Chile).

This event was the perfect preamble to the 11th Latin American Regional Meeting of the International Astronomical Union (IAU), held just the week after, on 12–16 December in Pucon, Chile.

Given the outstanding success of the summer school and its considerable impact on the education of future astronomers from Latin America, it is now being proposed that such multi-thematic schools should take place associated with the future Regional Meetings of the IAU.

The first multi-thematic Latin American Astronomy Summer School generated large interest among students. At the centre of the picture, some of the speakers (from left to right): Gloria Dubner (IAFE/CONICET, Argentina); Pat Osmer (Ohio State University, USA); Luis Felipe Rodríguez (UNAM, Mexico); Felix Mirabel (ESO); Bob Williams (STScI, USA); Malcolm Longair (Cambridge University, UK) and Dante Minniti (PUC, Chile).

Professor Bob Williams (former director of STScI, USA) stimulated young researchers with the possibilities for research on the distant, early Universe.

