

Local Outreach with the UCLA Planetarium

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November 21, 2022

Abstract

The UCLA Planetarium hosts star shows and lectures on various astronomy topics, educating UCLA and the broader Los Angeles community about science and the wonders of the night sky. It serves over 4000 people per year, as UCLA Astronomy’s largest outreach effort. We host private shows for visiting school groups (30% of our attendees), shows for UCLA astronomy courses (20%), and weekly public shows for the community at large (50%). Our planetarium and its events are run exclusively by graduate students, who also maintain its historic projectors and dome. In the near future, we plan to improve and expand our outreach efforts in two specific ways. Our outreach efforts are free for educational groups, but we currently do not provide travel support for visiting schools. We plan to actively reach out to school groups from underserved communities and hope to raise funds to cover these schools’ field trip and travel expenses. We also plan to improve our science communication effectiveness, with strategies for improving volunteer recruitment, training volunteers on effective public speaking skills, and improving the quality of our existing repository of presentations. Of course, these in person events are on hold due to the ongoing pandemic; in the meantime, we are developing ways to serve our audience virtually. We recently hosted our first “virtual” planetarium show on YouTube Live, with over 1,700 viewers on the livestream and over 7,300 total viewers. We welcome any suggestions or ideas to help us improve our planetarium outreach efforts!

The UCLA Planetarium

Educating the West Los Angeles Community about the Universe

The 2020 UCLA Planetarium Coordinators (Briley Lewis, Jesus Salas, Peter Williams, Ronald Lopez, Mason MacDougall, Aidan Gibbs, Rory Bentley)
University of California, Los Angeles, Department of Physics and Astronomy



The planetarium serves both UCLA and the broader Los Angeles community

- 3 show audiences:
 - free weekly public shows
 - private shows for local school fieldtrips
 - shows for UCLA astronomy classes
- Show format: 30 minute talk on a special topic (e.g. Tour of the Solar System) followed by a 30 minute star show with star projector
- Stargazing hosted by UCLA undergrads after the show
- We also participate in Exploring Your Universe, UCLA's yearly large science outreach event

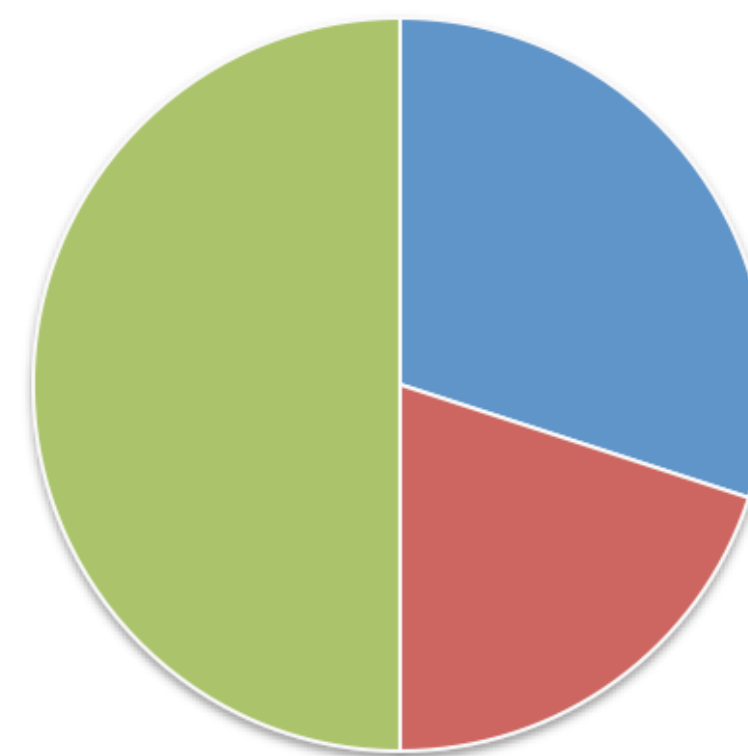
Entirely student run outreach program

- Originally constructed in 1957, the UCLA planetarium houses a traditional star projector (Viewlex Mark IIA), which uses light bulbs and pinhole screens to produce stars
- Our planetarium is operated by graduate and undergrad student volunteers in Physics and Astronomy

Impacts for both audiences and volunteers

- By serving K-12 groups, we spark interest in topics not usually covered in the usual school curriculum.
- Our diverse panel of volunteers helps inspire attendees of all races and genders to see themselves as scientists.
- Giving presentations provides volunteers with experience communicating complex ideas to the public

By the numbers...



50% of shows are for the general public

30% are private for school visits / fieldtrips

20% are for UCLA courses

We want to expand planetarium access to broader audiences (even in COVID-19!)

1. **Outreach to underserved schools:** We hope to actively reach out to school groups from underserved communities and raise funds to cover these schools' field trip and travel expenses.
2. **Maintenance + Funding:** We are looking for sources of funding for upkeep of our facility and its projector, including proposing for grants.
3. **Virtual Events:** Although we can't do in-person events, we hosted our 1st YouTube Live public planetarium show using Stellarium in August. Our Facebook event for that show reached over 22k people. Over 1.7k attendees joined us live, and over 7k people have watched the recording since. We plan to continue monthly virtual shows for the duration of the pandemic, focusing on celestial events and objects viewers can observe at home.

As UCLA Astronomy's largest outreach effort, we serve around **4,000** visitors each year.

Fully staffed and run by graduate students, we have been providing educational shows to our community for **over 60 years**.

Find out more about our program!



www.astro.ucla.edu/planetarium



@UCLAPlanetarium



UCLA Planetarium



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