A TYC Observatory: Challenges and Opportunities
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The Jack C Davis Observatory is on campus at Western Nevada College in Carson City, NV. It opened May 15, 2003 and has been a college and community resource ever since. The facility serves as the campus astronomy classroom, a public outreach facility, and a small astronomical research facility. Serving all these purposes is difficult. Space for displays, equipment, and especially maintenance is scarce. Classes 2 - 4 times a week and star parties every weekend leaves almost no time to transition between purposes.

As the only paid observatory staff, the director has to get a lot done including shoveling snow on winter weekends. Help from students and volunteers in the community is necessary to keep the facility running.

Students and community members have all contributed to a variety of research projects including double star astrometry and asteroid occultation measurements.

Being a part of the local community is essential to success. Outreach events at local schools and parks is the best way for people to learn about the observatory right in their own town. The observatory also maintains a planetary walkway trail on campus that locals and visitors all enjoy year round.

Solar astronomy provides daytime opportunities to connect with students, staff, and the community. Solstice celebrations are great summer activity.

Astrophotography generated at the Jack C Davis Observatory creates a connection between telescopes and images. Seeing the system that took a picture makes a personal connection for visitors. Live viewing with modern software is also popular on star party nights.

All sky cameras are great for outreach but also provide opportunity to monitor fireball meteors and monitor weather in advance of viewing events.