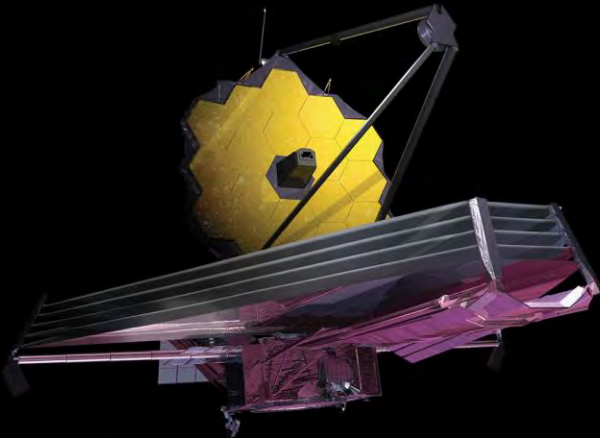


# What's in a name?

Shari Lifson  
AURA Corporate Communications Coordinator

NSF Large Facilities Workshop  
April 2-4, 2019



James Webb Space Telescope



Hubble Space Telescope



Daniel K. Inouye  
Solar Telescope



Mayall  
Telescope



Blanco  
Telescope



Large Synoptic  
Survey Telescope



Gemini Observatory



# National Center for Optical-Infrared Astronomy (NCOA)\*



New NSF nighttime astronomy center that will combine Gemini, NOAO and LSST operations into one organization

Allow NSF facilities to remain competitive on an international scale, lead on the forefront of astronomy research, and operate more efficiently

*\*Working Name*



National Optical Astronomy Observatory



Large Synoptic Survey Telescope



Gemini Observatory



What is NCOA?



Names and the act of naming have incredible power....Naming focuses our thoughts, makes them more clear, and changes our relationship with the object (or person) in question.

*J.A. Grier "The Crisis of Naming the Universe"*



Apple

Vs.



"No Go" in Spanish

Why is a name important?



“Science’s future lies in its power to inspire, and inspiration does not come from desiccated academic jargon. Time to wise up to the power of the brand.”

*Science needs smart brands too –*

*New Scientist*



Unify staff

Source of pride

Transition from legacy brand

Website/domain/etc.

**Why is the new center’s name important?**



“The acronym NCOA in Chile is perceived as a name with a strongly negative background to Chileans because COA is the word used in Chile for the jail dialect that prisoners use to communicate with each other.”

*AURA Chilean Employee*

- Negative perception in Chile
- Not meaningful to the mission
- No participation from staff or community
- Conflict with other organizations (National Council on Aging)

*Opportunity for positive branding*



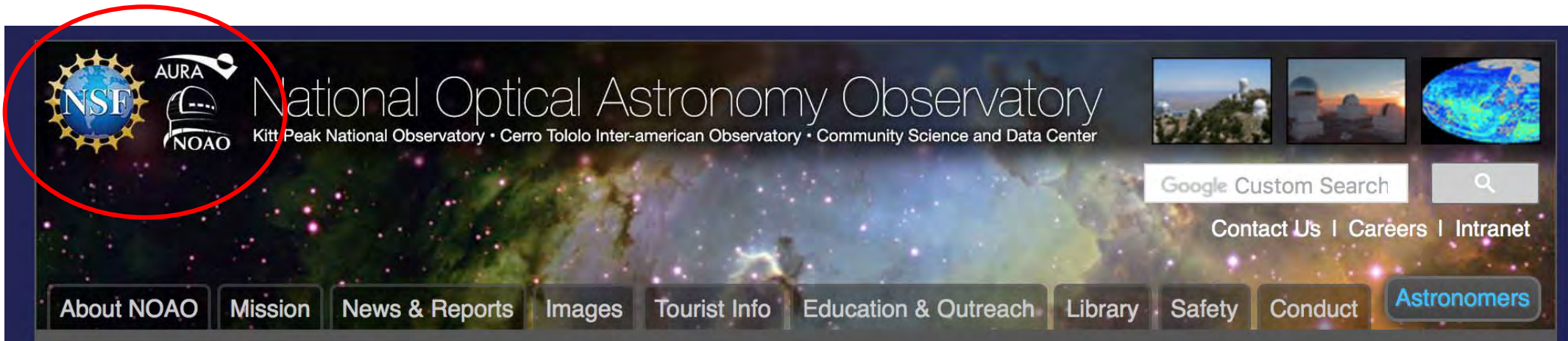
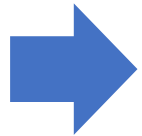
**Why not NCOA?**



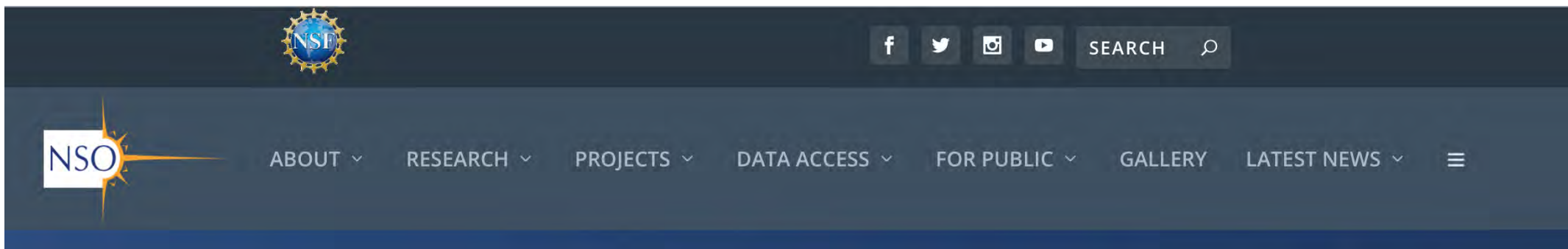


The National Science Foundation's  
National Center for ~~Worldwide~~ ~~Exciting~~ ~~Named~~ Astronomy

How do we avoid confusion?



NSO Website solution



## Implementing NSF Branding



## Criteria and Research

**Unique and Available** – research URLs

**Sound/Meaning** – in English and other languages

**Acronym** – is it meaningful?

**Length** – shorter is better

**Descriptive** – reflects the mission

**Test on target audiences**

## Find Candidates

Naming contest

Suggestions from staff

Chosen by management

## Dependent activities

IT– domain name

Logo and Branding

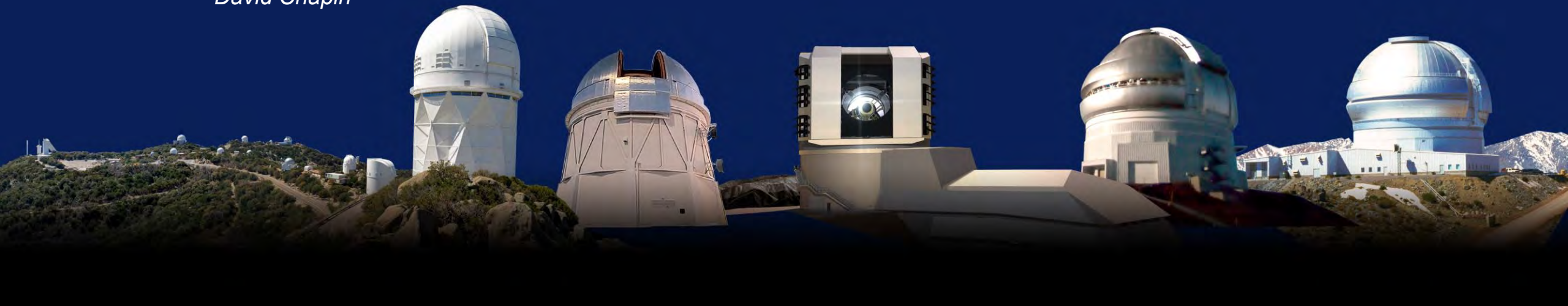
Implementation – website, signage, etc.



While the right name can help, often it's not the name itself that is significant, it's what the name comes to represent... such as **what the organization stands for, or the mission or vision of the organization.**

In other words, names are signifiers that eventually **come to stand for much more than a simple collection of letters or phonemes.**

*David Chapin*



**What's in a name?**

