

\*\*\*\*\* The San Diego State University Planetarium \*\*\*\*\*

\* Introduction \*

The astronomy department at San Diego State University (SDSU) operates a small (~40 seat), old (c. 1957), planetarium on the second floor of the physics-astronomy building (PA-209). The primary purpose of the planetarium is for instructional use within the department's astronomy laboratory class (ASTR 109); it also sees limited use in support of the department's larger lecture-based courses (e.g., ASTR 101). The planetarium is operated solely by the graduate students, who teach the laboratory classes and serve as teaching associates for the introductory lecture courses. There are no staff members within the department who give planetarium shows, and there are no regular "public" shows given by the department.

Occasionally, the planetarium is used by the astronomy department for public, "outreach", events. These are typically spearheaded by a (graduate or undergraduate) student or faculty member, and employ the use of several additional volunteers chosen to assure the quality of the event as well as the safety of the planetarium itself. The age of the planetarium, and its delicate condition, necessitate extreme care in its use, and only fully trained presenters are permitted to use it. Repairs are extremely costly, with the most recent repair (2013) requiring ~\$10,000 to fix and about half a year of down-time; it resulted from a single backpack accidentally hitting the planetarium machinery when a student was exiting the planetarium after a show.

Requests from "outside" groups (i.e., outside of the astronomy department but, generally, coordinated by an SDSU-affiliated organization or department) for planetarium shows are considered and encouraged, but are not guaranteed to be fulfilled, as they require a willing (and, available) volunteer from within the astronomy department to run them. They also, by necessity, require a significant investment (in people and time) from the requesting group.

Details on how to make such a request are given below, beginning with the basics of what is actually required to make a show happen! Requests are initiated through the "Public Outreach Coordinator", who is generally a rotating faculty member within the astronomy department.

\* "Groundrules" for Planetarium Shows \*

- 1) Size of group: All groups must have fewer than 40 individuals per planetarium show being requested.
- 2) Chaperones: At least \*2\* chaperones must be provided BY THE REQUESTING GROUP per group of 40 and must accompany all groups to the planetarium, and be present during the presentations. The chaperones MUST be familiar with the location of the planetarium so that the groups arrive on time -- i.e., they must have previously visited the planetarium prior to the day of the show -- and they must be aware of what their roles will be prior to arrival (discussed below).
- 3) Arrival time: Groups must arrive at the planetarium 5 minutes ahead of the nominal show time, and no "late arrivals" will be permitted.
- 4) Pre-planetarium show lecture: All groups will receive a brief (~5 minute) lecture prior to the show about planetarium etiquette (e.g., how important it is to be quiet in the planetarium, and stay seated at ALL times).
- 5) Bags: All groups must LEAVE ALL LARGE BAGS (e.g., backpacks) outside of the planetarium, in a location prescribed by the Presenter (most likely, in the lab room directly across from the planetarium, or in the hallway outside of right outside the planetarium) while attending the show. One of the chaperones provided by the requesting group must stay with the belongings (outside the planetarium) while the planetarium show takes place.
- 6) Behavior: Maintaining order during the presentation is solely the job of

the chaperone(s); all groups must agree that if there are any behavior problems during the planetarium show, the individual(s) will be escorted out of the planetarium by a chaperone, and will need to wait (with a chaperone) outside of the planetarium until the conclusion of the show.

In short: the student volunteers who staff our shows are experts at discussing the night sky, but not at keeping large groups (especially, those with children) well behaved!

With this background, then, here's how to go about requesting a show for your group.

\* How to Request a Planetarium Show \*

IF the "Ground Rules" given above are acceptable (and, doable), then, to request a planetarium show:

1) Fill out the form: Complete and submit the form "Requesting a Planetarium Show at San Diego State University" to the Public Outreach Coordinator through one of the following means:

o Mail to:

San Diego State University  
5500 Campanile Drive  
Mail Code 1221  
Department of Astronomy c/o Public Outreach Coordinator  
San Diego, CA 92182-1221

o Send via campus mail to:

Public Outreach Coordinator  
Astronomy Dept  
M/C 1221

o Scan and email as a pdf attachment to the Public Outreach Coordinator.

2) Wait while volunteer(s) are solicited: Upon receipt of the request, the Public Outreach Coordinator will circulate the details of the requested planetarium show(s) to all potential volunteers within the department. The success or failure of the request is then completely dependent on a volunteer offering to provide the show(s)!

3) Hear back from the Public Outreach Coordinator: The requesting group will be notified about the success of the request on (or, before) the "must know by" date indicated by the group on the request form. IF a volunteer is found for the show, the group will be put in direct contact with them to make all of the final arrangements, subject to the basic "Ground Rules" previously established. Please note that while every effort will be made to find a volunteer, in some cases it simply will not be possible -- please accept the astronomy department's apologies that we could not honor the request.

4) Attend and enjoy the show! On the day of the show, please arrive on time and with \*at least\* 2 chaperones per group of 40 (more are always desirable, especially for large groups); as described earlier at least one chaperone must wait outside of the planetarium during the show, while at least one must be inside during the show. The "Presenter" is responsible solely for giving the show!

\*\*\*\*\* Requesting a Planetarium Show at San Diego State University \*\*\*\*\*

To request a planetarium show, please begin by thoroughly reading the background information provided by "The San Diego State University Planetarium" Handout. ONCE THAT IS DONE, completely fill out this form and submit it following the instructions given in that Handout.

Name of group/department requesting a planetarium show: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of primary contact for the request : \_\_\_\_\_

Email of primary contact for the request : \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number of primary contact for the request : \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of primary contact, indicating acceptance of all "Ground Rules" for planetarium shows described in "The San Diego State University Planetarium" Handout : \_\_\_\_\_

Number of chaperones to be provided by the requesting group (minimum of 2 per each group of 40) : \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated number of attendees in the group(s) (maximum 40 per show being requested) : \_\_\_\_\_

Number of planetarium shows being requested : \_\_\_\_\_

Length of requested planetarium show(s); nominally, shows run about 40 minutes total, including introductory lecture, show, and exiting, but other show lengths can be accomodated : \_\_\_\_\_

"Must Know By Date". Please indicate the exact date by which your group MUST know whether or not a planetarium show will be able to be provided : \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate below the specific dates and times that your group(s) would be able to attend a show(s); feel free to indicate \*preferred\* dates/times with an asterisk. (The more flexible, the better!)

Please describe the expected makeup of the show attendees -- please be as specific as possible (e.g., "2nd grade elementary school children from one general class", "adult members of the public from a local astronomy club", etc.):

(OPTIONAL) Please indicate if any "gifts" or rewards (financial or otherwise) are expected to be provided by the requesting group for the volunteer Presenter. (Although completely optional, knowing such things ahead of time can certainly help drum up a volunteer for the show!)

Anything else we should know? Please write all you want (use back if needed).