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Operating the New Naval Hill Planetarium - An innovative and entrepreneurial approach

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Abstract content (Max 300 words) **Formatting & Special chars**

Within the context of the UFS's well established astrophysical research program and the high profile international astronomical endeavors in Southern Africa such as HESS and the SKA, the Naval Hill Planetarium opened on 1 November 2013. This is the first digital planetarium in sub-Saharan Africa. It is a robust tool for science education, communication and visualization. This comes at a time when South Africa urgently needs to develop human capacity to support its cutting edge international astronomical programs. To expand and enhance the digital content that the planetarium currently has at its disposal, an innovative and entrepreneurial approach is required. In this talk we discuss the international and local networking that will be necessary to make the Naval Hill Planetarium sustainable and enable it to acquire the necessary skills and to develop relevant content. The content will be developed using an iterative and participatory process. The tangible output of the project will be new digital planetarium content that is tailored to meet the needs of local, South African and even international audiences. In order to achieve this goal, equipment and institutional capacity are needed. Capacity will be developed through skills development and incubation programs. The project will ensure that the content of the planetarium's programs will speak to young children, the general public and the scientific communities. The content should provide a window to South Africa's national science facilities especially in the fields of physics and astronomy. Lastly we explain how the proposed new Free State Centre for Earth and Space, with the Naval Hill Planetarium as the first phase, will greatly enhance the sustainability of the planetarium. By including historical accents and conservation matters, the Centre for Earth and Space makes connections with the planetarium's historical astronomical roots and leverages its location in a game-reserve, thus ensuring an interdisciplinary approach.

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