

U. of Ariz. has telescope work contract

August 2 2006

(AP) -- The University of Arizona will get \$3 million for polishing the 4.3-meter mirror of a new \$40 million telescope partially funded by the owners of the Discovery Channel.

Under a contract with the Lowell Observatory, which is the telescope's operator and source of the bulk of the funding, the UA's College of Optical Sciences will start work on the 14-foot mirror blank later this month.

The mirror for the Discovery Channel Telescope - or DCT - was cast by Corning in New York.

Officials with the UA's Optical Fabrication and Engineering Facility said it could take several months just to locate and attach the "pucks" that will mount the 4-inch thick, 6,700-pound mirror blank to its support frame.

It will take roughly half a year to polish the mirror blank. The telescope will eventually be mounted at the Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff.

Lowell Observatory Director Bob Millis said he expects the telescope to celebrate "first light" in 2009 and be in fully functional operation in 2010.

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Citation: U. of Ariz. has telescope work contract (2006, August 2) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2006-08-ariz-telescope.html>

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