

A&A at the universities. My own impression, which seems to agree with that of IUCAA's Director, is that the interaction with universities has been quantitatively as planned but its quality needs to be looked into – easier said than done. Looking at the impressive calendar, one does wonder whether there is a risk of spreading oneself too thin. In the early years, the activities were somewhat top-heavy (i.e. relativity and theoretical cosmology were over-represented), and even after later expansion into other areas, one wonders whether the observational, phenomenological and instrumental sides of astronomy are fully taken care of. Of course, one could consciously stay away from them, since there are other astronomical institutions in the country, and in fact that would be better than some sub-critical activity for the sake of maintaining a presence.

Having congratulated IUCAA for its rapid progress in the last seven years, I may be forgiven some cautionary remarks, based on my experience with at least four institutions. The initial

years are in some sense a honeymoon period, when novelty and excitement act to mask the precursors of the troubles ahead. A wise institution (or couple!) would do well to anticipate some of these. Scientists are by their very nature individualists and hard to weld into a team. In fact, the problem of getting faculty to pull together and respect and take part in collective decision making is widespread. The alternative, of relying on the energy, initiative, and judgment of a single personality, does not work forever! Given the overall goal of helping the university sector, some guidelines have to be laid down and followed, so that the burden of this task does not fall on too few shoulders. One must say that by and large, the structure and functioning of IUCAA have a degree of transparency which is rare elsewhere in the country.

Ultimately, the relation of IUCAA and the Universities has to evolve to become an equal one, based on mutual respect, rather than mutual need. One knows that the world's best radio telescopes, run by the National Radio As-

tronomy Observatory (NRAO) in the USA, come under an organization called Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy (AURA) which is no mere figurehead, but takes a lively interest and role in the functioning of the NRAO. The dilemma of both IUCAA and IUC-DAEF is that at the moment, such inspired guidance from the universities will not be forthcoming and they will have to play the role of a guide to their own future masters. Lest such terminology seem repugnant, let us remember that Jawaharlal Nehru described himself as 'the first servant of the Indian people'. Everyone will wish IUCAA success in the difficult role that it has taken up, of being the first servant of Astronomy and Astrophysics in the Indian Universities.

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**MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
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