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(zoom) DESI: A Successful University –National Laboratory Partnership

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Recommended by the last P5 committee, construction of the Dark Energy Spectroscopic Instrument (DESI) began in 2014. Led by Lawrence Berkeley National Lab, major components of the new instrument were developed and built by university groups both in the US and in Europe.

The spectrograph mechanisms, the commissioning instrument and the instrument control and monitoring system were developed and built at Ohio State University, all 5,000 (plus spares) fiber positioning robots and the associated electronics were assembled at the University of Michigan, development and assembly of the new wide field corrector was led by University College of London in partnership with Fermi National Accelerator Lab, Durham University built the fiber cables, a consortium of Spanish universities and institutes developed the guide and alignment cameras, the University of Arizona developed the blue CCDs and the sky monitor system was provided by the University of California, Irvine. Instrument commissioning was led by the University of California, Santa Cruz.

DESI construction ended in 2019 and survey operations started in May 2021. Completing construction of an instrument as complicated as DESI on schedule is a clear success of this strong partnership between national labs and universities. Equally important is the support this partnership provides for critical infrastructure at the universities. Technical infrastructure at universities has been in decline for decades. Constructing major components of DESI at universities not only helped to reverse this trend but it also engaged and trained many early career scientists. We are looking forward to continuing these successful partnerships with DESI-II and eventually SPEC S5.

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