



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
COLLEGE OF SCIENCE

## Astronomy & Steward Observatory

### 2024 In Review



Dear Friends of Steward Observatory,

As we look ahead to 2025, we also take this opportunity to reflect on the big moments that Steward Observatory has had cause to celebrate throughout 2024. Please join us in looking back through this year's stories regarding the efforts and achievements of our students, staff, and faculty. The stories cover a broad range of topics, including telescope development, balloon launches, remarkable awards, history-making research, and student accomplishments. Thank you for being part of our community and for celebrating and [supporting](#) our milestones.

### Telescopes at the Cutting Edge



Photo: the Steward-led NASA GUSTO mission launches on the Ross Ice Shelf

A giant balloon carrying a telescope into the stratosphere above the Antarctic continent; an enormous telescope in the high desert of Chile sensitive enough to detect and analyze Earth-like planets orbiting distant stars; a ground-based telescope on an Arizona mountaintop with the capability of producing a more detailed image than the Hubble Space Telescope...the telescopes and missions that Steward Observatory supports are making history. 2024 has been a year of new partnerships (notably, welcoming Northwestern University into the international consortium for the Giant Magellan Telescope), a year of groundbreaking research, and a year of missions accomplished.

[Read more telescope news here!](#)

## Shining Students

This year marked the launch of CatSat, University of Arizona's first student-led mission. Steward Observatory attracts extraordinary students, who continue to impress us with their ingenuity and generous spirits as learners, innovators, and contributors to their communities. Many of our students are drawn to Steward for access to powerful telescopes and hands-on research—opportunities available to undergrads and graduate students alike. Research professor Eiichi Egami says, "Steward Observatory has succeeded in maintaining a positive cycle of getting large NASA space mission programs which in turn allow Steward to maintain outstanding people and recruit students." The caliber of our grads is reflected in the awards many of them have won this year.

[Read more student news here!](#)



Photo: the CatSat student team at integration with the satellite at Vandenberg Space Force Base (from left to right, Hilly Paige, Sarah Li, Shae Henley, Del Spangler, and Walter Rahmer).

## Researchers Pushing the Limits



Photo: [Click](#) through to hear how members of our Steward research team discovered the most distant galaxy ever seen.

The James Webb Space Telescope has allowed us to peer deeper than ever into the early Universe, using infrared instrumentation designed here at Steward Observatory. From discovering galaxies near Cosmic Dawn to identifying the most distant supernovas ever found, our researchers have been at the forefront of these discoveries. While results continue to roll in from JWST, we continue to find new ways to innovate here on-campus. At the Richard F. Caris Mirror Lab, our technicians are working to refining mirror technology for colossal telescopes and for more surprising earth-based climate solutions.

[Read more about some of our research highlights from 2024!](#)

## Lumminaries Among Us

This year, Steward Observatory celebrates the achievements of some of our brightest and most inspiring researchers and leaders. Regents Professor **Marcia Rieke** won the prestigious Gruber Cosmology prize for her “lasting impact on our understanding of the universe.” Steward Observatory’s Professor of Astronomy and Planetary Sciences **Daniel Apai** received a lifetime fellowship from AAAS in recognition of his “distinguished contributions to the field of astrobiology and astrophysics, particularly for advancements in our understanding of habitable exoplanets and planetary systems.” This year, **Buell Jannuzi**, Head of the Department of Astronomy and Director of Steward Observatory, receives the University of Arizona’s Distinguished Head/Director’s Award, an honor that reflects his abilities as a leader to engender trust, foster collaboration, and recruit and retain a diverse



Photo: Regents Professor Marcia Rieke won the \$500,000 Gruber Cosmology Prize

community of high-achieving staff, students and faculty. And the entire **MIRI team** won the Royal Astronomical Society Group Achievement Award in honor of their work on the James Webb Space Telescope.

[Read their stories here!](#)



### Become a Friend of Steward Observatory



2024 isn't over yet, so if you're wanting to make any last minute investment in Astronomy before the end of year there's still time!

[Donate Now](#)

**Donations made online or post marked December 31, 2023**

**are tax deductible this year.**

**Check payable:** University of Arizona Foundation

**Mail:** Steward Observatory 933 N. Cherry Ave., N205F Tucson, AZ 85721



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