



Media contact: Steve Brown
Copper Mountain College
6162 Rotary Way, P. O. Box 1398
Joshua Tree, CA 92252
760-366-3791 ext. 5310
stevebrown@cmccd.edu

Sky's The Limit Observatory Becomes a Satellite Campus for Copper Mountain College Astronomy Classes

August 31, 2023

Joshua Tree, CA. Just in time for Fall Semester Astronomy classes, an Affiliation Agreement between Copper Mountain College (CMC), and Sky's The Limit Observatory and Nature Center (STL), has established the observatory as a satellite campus for the college's Astronomy courses.

Astronomy students from CMC will have as their "laboratory," the dark desert skies of Twentynine Palms, on the border of Joshua Tree National Park.

CMC's Ramón Abrego III, Dean of Instruction, Distance Education, and Learning Resources, and STL's President Ann Congdon, along with Professor of Physics and Astronomy John Watkins, began discussions back in April, envisioning the Sky's The Limit campus as an ideal educational environment for students to gain hands-on – and eyes on – experience in astronomy.

"This is an exciting opportunity to combine resources in support of a meaningful educational experience, linking Sky's The Limit's mission – to facilitate hands-on learning – with CMC's excellent classroom instruction," says Sky's The Limit President Ann Congdon. "By welcoming Morongo Basin students to the rich celestial resource in their own backyard, STL hopes to promote appreciation and stewardship of a naturally dark night sky."

CMC's Abrego and Watkins couldn't agree more.

"Learning about astronomy and stargazing is one of the many reasons people appreciate coming to the Joshua Tree area," notes Abrego. "This is why I am excited that Copper Mountain College has entered into a formal agreement with Sky's The Limit Observatory and Nature Center to have our Astronomy Lab class take place on its beautiful property."

"I'm very excited about the new cooperative agreement between Copper Mountain College and Sky's The Limit Observatory and Nature Center," Watkins adds. "Imagine attending your astronomy

class and then stepping outside to some of the best night sky viewing in the country. It's really an ideal partnership for our astronomy students."

Sky's The Limit Observatory and Nature Center was established in 2004 with the mission of "facilitating hands-on experience for learning about the desert, earth, and sky." Since its inception, STL has provided Discovery Day field trips for school groups, and has occasionally hosted visiting college and university classes from outside the area. Now, local hi-desert college students will have an opportunity to benefit from the facility, which offers a selection of telescopes, including a solar telescope; an orrery – a walkable model of the solar system at a 20-billion-to-1 scale that is a useful tool for teaching; and, much more.

The affiliation with Copper Mountain College realizes Sky's The Limit's fundamental goal of introducing Morongo Basin students to their own beautiful and rich locale to promote understanding and appreciation for – and to assist in the preservation and stewardship of – a naturally dark night sky. The agreement also complements Copper Mountain College's ongoing desire to provide local students with unique learning opportunities that build connections with the college's desert district through offerings like its Desert Studies program and internships with Joshua Tree National Park.

Learn how to apply to the college and enroll into Astronomy classes by visiting the Copper Mountain College website at www.cmccd.edu. CMC is offering an online asynchronous Descriptive Astronomy lecture class that starts on October 16, 2023. While registration for Fall Semester's class has closed, the college will be offering the lab portion of the class during the Spring 2024 semester on Tuesday nights from 6:30-9:35 p.m. at Sky's The Limit Observatory. Spring 2024 classes start on Friday, January 26, 2024.

"We look forward to expanding your knowledge of astronomy and exploring the desert night sky with you," notes Abrego. "This is a perfect match as students will be able to truly enjoy all that the night sky has to offer while receiving high-quality instruction from Copper Mountain College faculty."

For more information on Sky's The Limit: contact@skysthelimit29.org.

For more information on Copper Mountain College or additional photos: Steve Brown at 760-366-3791 ext. 5310, or stevebrown@cmccd.edu.

Copper Mountain College Astronomy Courses for 2023-24

A-001 Descriptive Astronomy

This course, designed for non-science majors, provides an introductory view of planetary, stellar, and galactic astronomy. Students review research techniques, current knowledge and theory about the planets, stars, galaxies, and exobiology, as well as the age and origin of the universe. In addition, students explore the contributions of significant astronomers throughout history who shaped our current understanding of the universe.

A-001L DESCRIPTIVE ASTRONOMY LAB

This laboratory course provides an introduction to the geography of the sky and applications of astronomical methods involving projects performed by the student. Students acquire hands-on skill in the practical use of the telescope.

###

Photo Captions:

STLCMCPR1: Sky's The Limit Observatory and Nature Center President Ann Congdon, with Mike Schmitt, Board Treasurer and campus technology manager, join Copper Mountain College Professor of Physics and Astronomy John Watkins, and Ramón Abrego III, Dean of Instruction, Distance Education, and Learning Resources, in celebrating the new partnership between Sky's The Limit and Copper Mountain College.

STLCMCPR2: Copper Mountain College Professor of Physics and Astronomy John Watkins discusses new opportunities for the college's astronomy students thanks to a new partnership with Sky's The Limit Observatory and Nature Center. Sky's The Limit President Ann Congdon, Mike Schmitt, Board Treasurer and campus technology manager, and Ramón Abrego III, Dean of Instruction, Distance Education, and Learning Resources for CMC, gather in the observatory to celebrate the partnership.

Photo credit: Photos courtesy of Copper Mountain College.

For additional photos, logos, or information, please contact Steve Brown at 760-366-3791 ext. 5310, or stevebrown@cmccd.edu.

CMC's mission is to provide educational opportunities for diverse desert communities and beyond, through a comprehensive curriculum and support services that demonstrate a passion for the success of every individual student. Copper Mountain College offers high quality, affordable instruction that enables students to attain mastery in basic skills and career development, and build pathways to associate degrees, certificates, university transfer, and personal enrichment.

For general information about Copper Mountain College, visit www.cmccd.edu.