



Uwingu Response to the IAU and Extension of 'People's Choice' Contest to Choose A Name for the Planet Orbiting Alpha Centauri

Uwingu Funding Space Education Grants Via This Contest

Embargoed Until 8 a.m. Eastern Time, 15 April 2013.

Uwingu Is Funding Space Education Grants Via This Contest

Boulder, Colorado—The Uwingu™ 'People's Choice' public engagement contest at www.uwingu.com to solicit and vote on a popular name for the nearest known planet around another star has been extended a week, and will now end Monday April 22 at midnight US Eastern Daylight Time.

Uwingu's mission is twofold: To help the public better connect to space and the sky, and to create a new kind of grant fund for space researchers and educators using proceeds from our web site. Uwingu's name means sky in Swahili.

The International Astronomical Union (IAU) issued a press release on 12 April that significantly mis-characterized Uwingu's People's Choice contest and Uwingu itself.

Uwingu affirms the IAU's right to create naming systems for astronomers. But we know that the IAU has no purview—informal or official—to control popular naming of bodies in the sky or features on them, just as geographers have no purview to control people's naming of features along hiking trails. People

clearly enjoy connecting to the sky and having an input to common-use naming. We will continue to stand up for the public's rights in this regard, and look forward to raising more grant funds for space researchers and educators this way.

We now take this opportunity to note to the public that, contrary to the IAU press release:

Ø Informal names for astronomical objects are common (e.g., "The Milky Way"). And in fact, there is no such thing as a unified astronomical naming system, and there never has been. Claims to the contrary are simply incorrect, as an astronomical database search on a representative star, Polaris reveals. This star is also known to astronomers and the public as The North Star, Alpha Ursa Minori, HD8890, HIP 11767, SAO 308, ADS 1477, FK5 907, and over a dozen more designations.

Ø There are many instances where astronomers name things without going through the IAU's internal process. There are many of features on Mars, ranging from mountains to individual rocks, with names applied by Mars-mission scientists and never adopted by, or even considered by, the IAU. And Apollo astronauts did not seek IAU permission before naming features at their landing sites or from orbit.

Ø There are also numerous recent press releases in which astronomical objects were given names by astronomers without any IAU process: http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/hubble/science/sn-wilson.html ("Supernova Wilson"), <http://chandra.harvard.edu/photo/2012/elgordo/> (Galaxy cluster "El Gordo"), and <http://hubblesite.org/newscenter/archive/releases/galaxy/spiral/2004/04/> ("Black Eye Galaxy"), none drew attention from the IAU.

Ø Uwingu looks forward to continuing to help the general public to engage creatively in astronomy and to participate in the excitement of the exploration of the universe in which we all live.

In our Alpha Centauri People's Choice naming contest, anyone can nominate a name to honor a friend, colleague, loved one, or to recognize a place name, an author, an artist, or a sports team, for example. The name getting the highest number of votes will be declared the public's choice for Uwingu to

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use as the name for this mysterious new world. Never before has the public been asked to choose its favorite name for a planet.



Name nominations are \$4.99; votes cost \$0.99. Proceeds from naming and voting fuel new Uwingu grants to fund space education projects affected by sequestration cuts to NASA. Uwingu's exoplanet naming efforts were recently featured in Time Magazine, at <http://science.time.com/2013/03/07/name-your-own-exoplanet-for-4-99/>

The namer of the most popular name for Alpha Centauri Bb will receive prizes from Uwingu and will be recognized in a press release about the winning name. Uwingu is also giving prizes for runner-ups, and for all names that reach thresholds of 100, 1,000, and 10,000 votes.

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About Uwingu: Uwingu (which means "sky" in Swahili, and is pronounced "oo-wing-oo") was formed by a team of leading astronomers, planetary scientists, former space program executives, and educators. The company includes space historian and author Andrew Chaikin, space educator Dr. Emily CoBabe-Ammann, citizen science leader Dr. Pamela Gay, author and former museum science director Dr. David Grinspoon, planet hunter Dr. Geoff Marcy, planetary scientist and aerospace executive Dr. Teresa Segura, planetary scientist and former NASA science boss Dr. Alan Stern, planetary

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scientist and CEO of the Planetary Science Institute, Dr. Mark Sykes, former Executive Director of the Planetary Society Dr. Louis Friedman, and space artists Jon Lomberg and Dan Durda. In September, Uwingu successfully concluded one of the 25 largest Indiegogo crowd-funding campaigns ever to launch an ongoing series of public engagement projects. Visit Uwingu's web site at www.uwingu.com to learn more.

For more information, contact Dr. Alan Stern at stern@uwingu.com, or at 970-281-SKY1. Follow Uwingu on Twitter at UwinguSky; and friend Uwingu on Facebook.