

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Astronomy and Astrophysics Advisory Committee**

20 May 2010

National Science Foundation, Arlington, VA, via teleconference

Members attending:	Wendy Freedman (Chair) Sarah Church Kim Griest Jacqueline Hewitt Rocky Kolb	David Koo John Wefel Brian Winer Charles “Chick” Woodward
Agency personnel:	Craig Foltz, NSF-AST Philip Puxley, NSF-AST Elizabeth Pentecost, NSF-AST Donald Terndrup, NSF-AST Jean Rene Roy, NSF-LFO Morris Aizenman, NSF-MPS Beth Blue, NSF-BFA	Jon Morse, NASA HQ David Leisawitz, NASA HQ Hashima Hasan, NASA HQ Dennis Kovar, DOE Kathy Turner, DOE Kim Briggman, OSTP
Others:	Michael Moloney, NRC Steve Unwin, JPL Michael Devirian, JPL	

MEETING CONVENED 12:00 PM EDT, 20 MAY 2010

The Chair called the meeting to order, and all participants identified themselves.

The minutes from the 1-2 February and March 4 meetings were approved by the Committee.

Elizabeth Pentecost, the AAAC Executive Secretary, reviewed the list of identified Conflicts of Interest (COIs) for the AAAC. There were no updates to the list provided to the Committee in February.

The Chair asked the agencies to provide an update on preparations for responding to the Astro2010 Decadal Survey.

Phil Puxley, on behalf of Jim Ulvestad, reported to the Committee on NSF’s efforts in preparing for the decadal survey report’s recommendations. The Division Director has been reorganizing the responsibilities within AST, specifically, to make sure that program officers have time and energy to carry out the recommendations of the survey. There will be individuals assigned to the highest priority projects. The Director is gathering information from those likely projects, on what might be expected, characteristics of potential partnerships. The process has started and will continue through July. There have been discussions assessing program balance, shifting balance in response to the survey recommendations giving existing conditions and budget scenarios. The Division Director has made presentations at the BPA and AAS meetings. Even if AST is fortunate enough to receive a 7% growth in the budget, one of the important things to

remember is that AST would not be able to do two new starts, increase grants, and maintain facilities. If the budget were to be held at 2.5%, AST might only be able to do one new start or increase grants or maintain facilities. Anything lower than 2.5%, it would be very difficult to do any new starts because of maintaining growth in the budget for ALMA operations.

With regards to mid-scale projects, there is a NSB task force looking across the Foundation at how mid-scale projects might be funded in the future. Mid-scale projects fall between the increasing gap of small scale projects like MRI and the major equipment and facilities (MREFC (10% of directorate budget) projects.

Other news items included: (1) Vernon Pankonin being appointed Acting Deputy Division Director. He is following Nigel Sharp whose appointment expired. The DDD position will be readvertised; (2) the solicitation for NAIC has been released. Letters of Intent are due in August with proposals due in October; and (3) NSF funding for the VAO has been awarded.

Puxley thanked Wendy Freedman, Rocky Kolb, Bruce Balick, and Chris Stubbs for all of their hard work on the Committee.

Dennis Kovar reported that DOE is waiting for input from the decadal survey. There will be a briefing in early August to the agencies on survey outcomes. This will allow for the agencies to have an influence in the 2012 budget process. DOE is looking at options. DOE has received guidance from HEPAP and PASAG with a cost of living, number, size, and start date and are talking with NSF and NASA about potential options. DOE is bringing onboard a new person to work with Kathy Turner in the non-accelerator area. Michael Salamon will be joining DOE in May.

Woodward asked if the Decadal Survey will be released in time for an effective August briefing. Kovar replied that the three agencies will have a briefing in August with the expectation that there will be a draft posted on the web site in either September or October.

Michael Moloney from NRC indicated to the Committee that the agencies had requested a briefing in early August and the NRC has adjusted its schedule to accommodate this. It is standard practice, that prior to release of the document, NRC gives the sponsors a briefing so that they can prepare their own internal responses before the report goes public. The NRC will give an embargoed briefing to the agencies.

David Leisawitz reported that Michael Salamon is leaving NASA to work at DOE. NASA is looking forward to the early August briefing. NASA is gearing up to turn around quickly and get things going as soon as they have the survey priorities. They are doing as much advance preparation as possible. With regards to the R&A Program, NASA intends to review the program, its overall balance across subfields, the guest investigator and long term grants, fellowships, etc. NASA has formed Program Assessment Groups (PAGs) that will be producing technology roadmaps. NASA has met with NASA and DOE to get organized to enable a coordinated multi-agency effort for ground-based and space-based astronomy in response to the decadal survey.

The Chair was pleased to hear that there is coordinated effort going on between the agencies in preparation for the decadal survey report.

Kolb asked a question about technology roadmaps. In past years, there was a larger overall roadmapping process. Is this new exercise, an overall roadmap or just technology roadmaps?

Morse replied that there will be an integrated effort within SMD with synergies among the other divisions. Kolb noted that there was community involvement in the roadmapping process in the past. What level of community input will be used now. Morse replied that the PAGs are the conduit for community involvement. They will help turn the recommendations of the decadal survey into an implementation plan. There are scientists, not just technologists on the PAGs.

On behalf of the committee, the Chair should send a letter of appreciation to Michael Salamon, Nigel Sharp, and Craig Foltz for their hard work. The chair agreed.

Koo asked NASA and DOE to address their capacity to accommodate major initiatives recommended by the decadal survey. Morse replied that NASA has explicit guidelines about the probable or possible resources that might be available in the next decade for new initiatives. It will be difficult to do any significant large mission or medium class mission before JWST launches. NASA needs to make sure that SOFIA and JWST get done and get to the launch pad as soon as possible. This will temper NASA's ability to have a queue of projects for which NASA can begin to work on after JWST and SOFIA move forward. There is guidance that is commensurate with resources going forward.

Kovar replied that there are possible projects that DOE might partner with NSF and NASA. Guidance has been given by HEPAP and PASAG and is going to be limited to one large involvement or a couple of involvements as a minor partner. This is outlined in the PASAG report.

One of the activities for the AAAC during the coming months will be to help manage expectations from the decadal survey. Budgets are finite and the list of things that the community would like to see done will remain a challenge. There will be more disappointed people than pleased ones given the fiscal realities.

An important issue will be that the new membership on the Committee should overlap with the membership from the decadal survey.

Winer asked how comfortable the Committee was in the decadal survey report being released in time for a meaningful discussion at the October AAAC meeting. Moloney replied he is pretty comfortable that it will be released.

In conclusion, the Chair expressed her thanks to the Committee as she rotates off the AAAC.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 12:45 PM EDT, 20 MAY 2010