National Science Foundation
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AST 13-002

Dear Colleague Letter: Division of Astronomical Sciences (AST) Employment Opportunities for Program Director (Open Until Filled)

October 17, 2013

Dear Colleague:

The Division of Astronomical Sciences (AST), within the Directorate for Mathematical and Physical Sciences (MPS) at the National Science Foundation (NSF), announces a nationwide search for scientists in relevant research disciplines to fill the following position under the provisions of the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (see details below):

Program Director: Astronomy and Astrophysics Research Grants (AAG) Program

Formal consideration of interested applicants will begin October 31, 2013, with an approximate beginning appointment date in February 2014. At least one additional appointment is expected to be available in 2015.

While disciplinary expertise will be expected for the Program Director, the Division is seeking scientists with a broad set of abilities to manage varied and demanding duties in scientific program management, to work among a diverse team of scientific and administrative professionals, and to support the Division's responsibilities within NSF's overall mission: to promote the progress of science and engineering; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; and to secure the national defense.

The Program Director will be involved in activities that include planning, budget development, project oversight, the merit review and proposal recommendation process, the preparation of written material about the research supported by the Division, and interactions with other NSF programs, Federal agencies and organizations. Program Directors are expected to bring their scientific expertise to the activities of the Division, and to serve as a liaison between the astronomical community and NSF, disseminating information about NSF and Division activities and opportunities. There are opportunities to participate in Foundation or Directorate-wide activities in areas of education, facilities management, strategic planning, multi-disciplinary research, and program development. Candidates are expected to work with the astronomical research and education community to broaden the diversity of participants in NSF programs. Candidates in all areas of astronomical expertise will be considered; those with backgrounds in galactic and extragalactic astronomy are especially encouraged to apply.

BRIEF PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The mission of the Division of Astronomical Sciences is to support forefront research in ground-based astronomy; to help ensure the scientific excellence of the U.S. astronomical community; to provide access to world-class research facilities through merit review; to support the development of new

instrumentation and next-generation facilities; and to encourage broad understanding of and diverse participation in the astronomical sciences.

The Division supports research in all areas of astronomy and astrophysics and related multidisciplinary studies. Modes of support include single-investigator and collaborative awards, as well as funding for acquisition and development of astronomical instrumentation, technology development for future ground-based facilities, and educational projects that leverage the Division's research investments to build research and workforce capacity and to increase scientific literacy. Through the national observatories and international partnerships, the Division provides support for a system of multi-aperture, research-class telescopes as well as frontier facilities that enable transformational capabilities in both radio and optical/infrared astronomy.

The **Astronomy and Astrophysics Research Grants (AAG)** program provides individual investigator and collaborative research grants for observational, theoretical, laboratory and archival data studies in all areas of astronomy and astrophysics, including but not limited to the following areas of study:

- Planetary and Exoplanetary Astronomy: Studies of Solar System and extrasolar planets; the detailed characterization, structure and composition of the surfaces, interiors, and atmospheres of planets and satellites; the nature of small bodies (asteroids, comets, and Kuiper-belt objects); the inter-planetary medium; and the origin, formation, and development of the Solar System and other planetary systems.
- Stellar Astronomy and Astrophysics: Studies of the structure and activity of the Sun and other stars; the physical properties and composition of all types of single and multiple stars; compact objects and their interactions; star formation and stellar evolution; stellar nucleosynthesis; and the properties of atoms and molecules of relevance to stellar astronomy.
- Galactic Astronomy: Studies on the composition, structure and evolution of the Milky Way Galaxy and nearby galaxies. Research may focus on the stellar populations in these galaxies; the characteristics of star clusters; the interstellar medium; and the properties of atomic and molecular constituents of the interstellar medium.
- Extragalactic Astronomy and Cosmology: Studies of the Universe beyond our Galaxy. Research topics include galaxy formation, evolution and interaction; active galaxies; quasars; the intergalactic medium; large-scale structure; and all areas of cosmology.

NSF Program Directors bear the primary responsibility for carrying out the Agency’s overall mission. To discharge this responsibility requires not only knowledge in the appropriate disciplines, but also a commitment to high standards, a considerable breadth of interest and receptivity to new ideas, a strong sense of fairness, good judgment, and a high degree of personal integrity.

Qualification requirements include a Ph.D. or equivalent professional experience in a relevant scientific discipline plus after the award of the Ph.D., six or more years of successful research, research administration and/or substantial managerial experience in academe, industry, or government. Appointees are expected to have significant and relevant knowledge of research and research-related activities in astronomy and astrophysics. Also desirable are knowledge of the general scientific community, skill in written communication and preparation of technical reports, and an ability to communicate orally. Expertise in Computational and Data-enabled Science and Engineering, including areas such as cyber-infrastructure and the management and use of very large data sets, will be beneficial. All appointees are expected to function effectively both within specific programs and in a team mode, contributing to and coordinating with organizations in the Directorate, across the Foundation, and with other Federal and State government agencies and private-sector organizations as necessary. Such responsibilities can include serving on committees developing new administrative approaches and implementing community-based recommendations for Division activities. Periodic appointments to leadership of interdivisional, inter-directorate and interagency programs may be made.

Program Director positions recruited under this announcement will be filled under the following rotational program:

> **Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) Assignments**: Individuals eligible for an IPA assignment with a Federal agency include employees of State and local government agencies or institutions of higher education, Indian tribal governments, and other eligible organizations in instances where such assignments would be of mutual benefit to the organizations involved. Initial assignments under IPA provisions may be made for a period up to two years, with a possible extension for up to an additional two-year period. The individual remains an employee of the home institution and NSF provides the negotiated funding toward the assignee's salary and benefits. Initial IPA assignments at NSF are made for a one-year period and may be extended by mutual agreement.

For additional information on Intergovernmental Personnel Act assignments at NSF, please see http://www.nsf.gov/about/career_opps/rotators/ipa.jsp.

For additional information about AST research areas and programs, please see http://www.nsf.gov/div/index.jsp?div=ast.

Should you or your colleagues be interested in this position, please email a current CV accompanied by a cover letter that highlights the background that specifically relates to the program objectives to: ast-ipa@nsf.gov.

NSF IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER COMMITTED TO EMPLOYING A HIGHLY QUALIFIED STAFF THAT REFLECTS THE DIVERSITY OF OUR NATION.