



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA OBSERVATORIES/LICK OBSERVATORY  
DEPARTMENT OF ASTRONOMY AND ASTROPHYSICS

SANTA CRUZ, CALIFORNIA 95064

May 22, 2008

Professor Jonathan Lunine  
Chair, Exoplanet Task Force

Re: Thanks to Exoplanet Task Force Committee

Dear Jonathan:

The Astronomy and Astrophysics Advisory Committee (AAAC) thanks you and your committee members for your very thorough and detailed report. The ExoPTF report clearly reflects a major investment of time and intellectual effort by the committee members. We particularly appreciate the effort the committee put into i) soliciting input from the broad community interested in exoplanet detection and characterization, both through the “white papers” and through invited discussions, ii) explaining the relevance and importance of searches for planets, iii) the thoughtful consideration of the value and challenges of different scientific approaches for tackling planet detection and characterization, iv) establishing a realistic, integrated ground- and space-based program, and v) producing a coordinated program phased to progressively more challenging programs over the 15-yr time span requested in the charge to the committee. The report provides an impressive framework for advancing an important area of scientific research.

The AAAC gave careful consideration to your draft report, as presented to us in the February 2008 AAAC meeting, suggested a number of changes to clarify your recommendations, and then voted last week at its May 2008 meeting to accept and transmit the ExoPTF report to the agencies for their consideration. We greatly appreciated your efforts to keep the AAAC updated and informed on the ExoPTF committee's progress, for your presentations at several AAAC meetings, and for your willingness to incorporate the AAAC's clarifying suggestions.

The transmittal letters and the report will be placed on the public ExoPTF website at <http://www.nsf.gov/mps/ast/exoptf.jsp>. We will be discussing with the agencies the steps that they plan to take to respond to the report. We have asked them also to make full use of the recommendations in your report when they develop plans relating to exoplanet activities, and when proposals are reviewed for programs in the areas covered by your report. We expect that your report will be widely discussed within the exoplanet community, and will be a major input to the 2010 Decadal Survey panels and committee as they look to defining a mission and project suite for the coming decade. We encourage you to transmit your report to your colleagues.

The challenges facing astronomy and astrophysics are many and increasing. The guidance provided by your report will be very particularly important for the agencies, OSTP, OMB,

Congress and the scientific community as we work to move forward on exoplanet detection and characterization projects expeditiously and cost-effectively. We deeply appreciate the time and effort that you and the Task Force members put into making the ExoPTF report such an excellent product.

Sincerely yours, on behalf of the Committee,



Garth D. Illingworth,  
Chair, Astronomy and Astrophysics Advisory Committee

Cc:

ExoPTF Committee Members:

Debra Fischer, Heidi Hammel, Thomas Henning, Lynne Hillenbrand, James Kasting, Greg Laughlin, Bruce Macintosh, Mark Marley, Gary Melnick, David Monet, Charley Noecker, Stan Peale, Andreas Quirrenbach, Sara Seager, Josh Winn

NSF: Tony Chan, Craig Foltz, Wayne Van Citters, Eileen Friel, Dana Lehr, Michael Briley

NASA: Ed Weiler, Jon Morse, Michael Salamon, Paul Hertz, Rick Howard, Eric Smith, Stephen Ridgway, Zlatan Tsvetanov

DOE: Dennis Kovar, Kathy Turner

OSTP: John Henry Scott, Jean Cottam

NAS: Craig Hogan

MPSAC: Bob Williams

AAAC Members:

Bruce Balick, Bruce Carney, Scott Dodelson, Wendy Freedman, Katherine Freese, Rocky Kolb, Daniel Lester, Sterl Phinney, Marcia Rieke, Keivan Stassun, Christopher Stubbs, Alycia Weinberger

AAAC 2007 Members:

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