

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20502

December 22, 2007

Dr. Roger Blandford, Chair
Astronomy Division Senior Review and
Richard Chace Tolman Professor of Theoretical Astrophysics
130-33 California Institute of Technology
Pasadena, California 91125

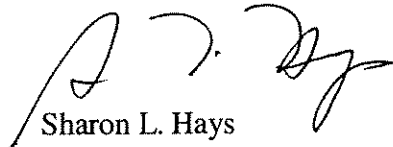
Dear Dr. Blandford:

Astronomy is at a crossroads. Exploration of the cosmic frontiers requires instrumentation of increasing sophistication and technological complexity for studying the birth and death of stars, extra-solar planets, distant galaxies and fundamental processes in the early universe. As instrumentation grows in complexity and cost, the scientific community must respond both by developing new mechanisms for interagency, international and public-private sponsorship of these projects, and by making difficult choices between the many existing and new scientific opportunities. The National Science Foundation (NSF) - the Federal steward for ground-based astronomy - has been responsive to the changing nature of scientific research and, with great insight, has challenged the community to think carefully about the path forward. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the recent Senior Review for the Astronomy (AST) Division at the NSF.

The Senior Review is critical to ensuring that future resources are allocated to priority projects and facilities, as determined by a panel of expert scientists and users of current and future facilities. I personally want to extend my gratitude to the members of the Senior Review for the time and energy they invested in this deliberative process and to congratulate them for writing such a thoughtful report.

It is difficult to set priorities. We know this from the arduous process undertaken by the National Research Council in formulating its decadal survey for astronomy and astrophysics. Nevertheless, in a time of constrained resources it is even more important for the agencies, together with the communities they serve, to make decisions in which new opportunities are weighed against existing obligations. The exemplary efforts of the Senior Review committee and the staff in the AST Division are greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Sharon L. Hays
Associate Director and
Deputy Director for Science

cc: Wayne Van Citters
Arden L. Bement, Jr.
J. Craig Wheeler