

National Science Foundation

4201 Wilson Boulevard

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Update

NSF Division of Astronomical Sciences Senior Review

Dear Colleagues:

The AAS has graciously offered to distribute a series of updates about the planning and execution of the Senior Review that I outlined in the last *AAS Newsletter*. This is the first of these updates.

I am very pleased to be able to lead off with some excellent news, that Dr. Roger Blandford has agreed to chair the Senior Review. Obviously Roger brings a wide breadth of knowledge and interest, a reputation of fairness and impartiality, and a position of leadership as co-chair of the CAA, to a challenging and vital task for our community. I am confident that all will support him and his committee in this effort, and provide them with carefully considered, constructive inputs and opinions.

We will now move to assemble the body of the committee, hoping to proceed with 10-12 members. We have asked for nominations from the CAA, AAAC, AAS, the facilities themselves, and the community at large. Please give this some thought and send me your suggestions by 30 July; if approached to be a member, please give it serious consideration.

We will be working with Roger and the committee over the next months to flesh out the details of the process outlined in my *Newsletter* article. Four guiding principles are already clear:

It will be a deliberate process with ample opportunity for community input

The emphasis will be on optimizing science output with limited resources. Thus creative approaches to preserving scientific capability at lower cost to the Division could well be as important as more immediate instrument closures. A good reason for starting this process now is to allow time to explore these approaches.

Since the changes in balance, operating mode, instrument complements, etc., will take some years to be realized, and will affect our discipline for decades, we must take the time to do this right and not be bound by artificial deadlines.

We must realize that the \$30M target I have talked about is, a) just that – a target that we may or may not be able to realize, and, b) only a down payment on our projected needs, full realization of which would require substantial growth in the Division's budget. It is my hope that the Senior Review, properly conducted and supported by the community, will prepare us to argue successfully for that growth in future years.

I am convinced that, with a wise and fair committee and the will of the community to pull together for the overall good of the field, we will reach a consensus and emerge both stronger in resolve and an even more effective model of how a scientific community can come together to prioritize and pursue a scientific vision.

Sincerely,

Wayne Van Citters
Division Director

ps: please send suggestion for committee members (as well as any other comments) to both me (gvancitt@nsf.gov) and Eileen Friel (efriel@nsf.gov).

Mailed to US members from aas.org 7 July 2005