

Dear Colleagues:

The Division of Astronomical Sciences is beginning the process of a "Senior Review" of its portfolio of facilities. This review, a recommendation of the most recent Decade Survey, is motivated at this particular time by a combination of the current Federal budget outlook, the ambitions of the astronomical community as evidenced in the Decade Survey and reports such as "Connecting Quarks with the Cosmos," and the growth in the AST budget over the past five years. This review is designed to examine the balance of our investments in the facilities we support and to identify approximately \$30M in redirected annual spending by FY2011 through selective reductions in the operations of existing facilities. The primary goal of the review and the resultant adjustment of balance is to enable progress on the recommendations of the Decade Survey, including such things as operations funds for ALMA. At the same time we must preserve, indeed grow, a healthy core program of astronomical research that will be undertaken with the new facilities, seed the next generation of capability, and attract, train, and retain the next generation of astronomical researchers. We recognize that this will be a difficult task and that the end result may well be that some facilities are judged to be no longer viable under the circumstances. We also recognize that the landscape of U.S. astronomy could change dramatically as a result of some of these actions. The question for all of us is to judge whether these changes are viable - leading to a vital and sustainable future - or whether the pace and scope of change necessary to realize the cumulative aspirations of the community under severely constrained budgets are too drastic. Done properly and wisely, I believe this review can result in a healthier program in the long-term, and one that is poised to take advantage of improving outlooks when they occur.

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