



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

SANTA CRUZ, CALIFORNIA 95064

January 23, 2006

Dr Anne Kinney, Director, Astrophysics Division
Science Mission Directorate, NASA

Dr. Robin Staffin, Associate Director
Office of High Energy Physics, Office of Science, DOE

Dr. Wayne Van Citters, Division Director
Division of Astronomical Sciences, MPS, NSF

Dr Robert Dimeo, Acting Assistant Director for Physical Sciences and Engineering
National Science and Technology Council, OSTP

Dear Dr Kinney, Dr Staffin, Dr Van Citters and Dr Dimeo:

The AAAC was encouraged to hear at its last meeting that significant progress has been made towards the launch of GLAST in 2007. The concerns of the last year or two have been largely overcome and the project is moving ahead well. Since GLAST is a one of the first major inter-agency collaborative projects for NASA and DOE, the AAAC has been quite interested in some of the difficulties that have arisen along the way, and the steps taken to alleviate the problems.

As we have discussed at several of our past meetings, particularly during the discussion with OSTP, the AAAC is very interested in seeing a "lessons learned" activity that would provide a guide to the agencies, OMB, OSTP and Congress on what problems arose re GLAST and how they were dealt with, and whether, in retrospect, different approaches could have been taken that might have minimized some of the problems. Since time is passing, and the key players in some of the activities will move on to other responsibilities, it would be valuable to carry out a "lessons learned" effort soon, and produce a report that captures the experience and wisdom of the current players.

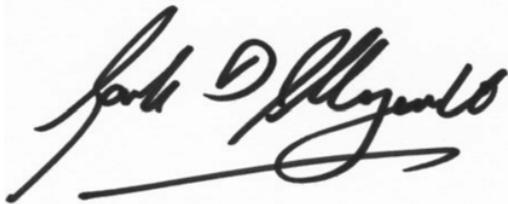
It would also be valuable to enhance this effort so that it also covers other interagency projects, such as the NSF-DOE-Smithsonian project VERITAS, so that the experiences of all three agencies in the astrophysics arena could be captured at this time. Though we recognize that the nature of the cooperation on joint projects will depend both on the project and the agencies involved, the report could capture such differences. There is no "one-size-fits-all" approach. This is clearly a "living process" in that current and future activities will add to the experience in inter-agency projects, but it is of considerable value to summarize what has been learnt to date.

The AAAC recommends that the agencies consider the production of a report incorporating the thoughts and experiences regarding process, oversight, coordination, and resolution of technical and fiscal challenges for GLAST and VERITAS (and for other projects, as appropriate, e.g., JDEM, AMS, CMB experiments). Such a report could be used as a guide, within the agencies and for any advisory groups, such as the AAAC, for future collaborative efforts.

To help clarify our mutual thinking on the nature of the report and the process, the AAAC would like to discuss this further with you at our next meeting. A number of questions have arisen that could be elucidated through further discussion.

For example, it is unclear to the AAAC at this time whether this report should be developed through meetings, or through a short focused "workshop" that provides a broader forum where others involved in the projects are asked to discuss some of the problems and how they were rectified. The committee would be happy to discuss this and provide some thoughts, if that would be useful. Coordination of this activity is at the discretion of the agencies, but the AAAC would encourage consultation with OSTP. Would some assessment of the additional challenges introduced by international cooperation also be useful? The AAAC would appreciate an initial discussion of the content, process and the schedule at its next meeting (presumably with a follow-up discussion in its May meeting) so that we could develop a mutual understanding of the nature of the process, what would be covered in the report, and the timescale.

Sincerely yours, on behalf of the Committee,



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

Cc:

NSF: Eileen Friel, Dana Lehr

NASA: Paul Hertz, Michael Salamon

DOE: Kathy Turner.

OMB: Paul Shawcross, Donovan Robinson, Amy Kaminski, Joel Parriott,
David Trinkle

AAAC: Neta Bahcall, Princeton; John Carlstrom, Chicago;
Bruce Carney, UNC Chapel Hill; Wendy Freedman, Carnegie;
Katherine Freese, Michigan; Robert Kirshner, Harvard;
Daniel Lester, Texas/Austin; Angela Olinto, Chicago;
Rene Ong, UCLA; Sterl Phinney, Caltech;
Catherine Pilachowski, Indiana; Abhijit Saha, NOAO