



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

SANTA CRUZ, CALIFORNIA 95064

July 5, 2006

Dr. Arden L. Bement, Jr., Director
National Science Foundation

Dear Dr. Bement:

The Astronomy and Astrophysics Advisory Committee (AAAC) would like to express its deep appreciation for your strong support, and that of Deputy Director Olsen, for the rebaselined, 50-antenna Atacama Large Millimeter Array (ALMA). We were very happy to hear that the NSB had approved the recommendation to go forward with ALMA with its new project plan and budget. The changes are substantial, and we recognize the added challenge that the revised budget profile and the overall cost increase brings to the NSF and the MREFC account.

ALMA will be a remarkably powerful astronomical tool, enabling the exploration of some of the outstanding scientific questions of our time from how stars and planetary systems form to the birth and growth of galaxies in the early years of the universe. This transformational science is what led to ALMA's very high ranking in the Astronomy Decadal Survey. ALMA, as a global science project involving multiple nations, is also a pathfinder for major scientific projects of the future, be they in astronomy or other scientific areas. Its successful completion in 2012 will not only herald a new era of astronomical discovery and understanding, but will also provide the NSF and the science community a valuable experience base from which to do other major international projects.

The AAAC also appreciates the strong commitment of MPS and AST to this program, and we would like to offer our continuing support for ALMA as the project moves through its construction phase into operations.

Sincerely yours, on behalf of the Committee,

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

Cc:

NSF: Kathie Olsen, Judith Sunley, Wayne Van Citters, Eileen Friel, Dana Lehr

OSTP: Rob Dimeo

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