

**Meeting Minutes of the  
Astronomy and Astrophysics Advisory Committee  
4 March 2022**

**Members Attended:**

Priyamvada Natarajan (Chair)	Stephan Meyer
Kyle Dawson (Vice-Chair)	Michael McCarthy
Wenda Cao	Willie Rockward
Alexie Leauthaud	Deirdre Shoemaker
Nancy Chanover	Abigail Vieregg
Nikole Lewis	

**Agency Personnel:**

Martin Still, NSF-AST	Paul Hertz, NASA
Debra Fischer, NSF-AST	Terri Brandt, NASA
James Neff, NSF-AST	Eric Smith, NASA
Donna O'Malley, NSF-AST	Hashima Hasan, NASA
Renee Adonteng, NSF-AST	Hannah Jang-Condell, NASA
Matt Benaquista, NSF-AST	Enidia Santiago, NASA
Dave Boboltz, NSF-AST	
Ashley VanderLey, NSF-AST	Kathy Turner, DOE-HEP
Glen Langston, NSF-AST	Ted Lavine, DOE-HEP
Craig McClure, NSF-AST	Helmut Marsiske, DOE-HEP
Tanner Abraham, NSF-AST	Patricia Crumley, DOE
Alison Peck, NSF-AST	
Jonathan Williams, NSF-AST	Yi Pei, OMB
David Morris, NSF-AST	
James Higdon, NSF-AST	Kartik Sheth, OSTP
Sarah Higdon, NSF-AST	
Carrie Black, NSF-AST	
Andreas Berlind, NSF-AST	
Andrea Prestwich, NSF-AST	
Luke Sollitt, NSF-AST	
Jim Ulvestad, NSF-OD	
Saul Gonzalez, NSF-MPS	
Tie Luo, NSF-MPS	
Derrick Hampton, NSF-DAS	
Tamim Wessal, NSF-DAS	
Elena Hillenburg, NSF-DAS	

**Others in Attendance:**

Rachel O'Connor, Ball Aerospace	Valentin Pillet, NSO
Marcia Smith, SpacePolicyOnline.com	Jeff Martoff, Temple U.
TRẦN NGUYỄN BÍCH PHƯƠNG	Charles Lillie, Lillie Consulting LLC
John Matthews, U Utah	Tim Bastian, NRAO
Nick Saab, Lewis-Burke Associates LLC	James Murday, U Southern California
Griffin Reinecke, Lewis-Burke Associates LLC	Kate Von Holle, U Chicago
Matt Malkan, UCLA	Etienne Dauvergne, ESA

Mayra Montrose, L3Harris Technologies  
Raha Hakimdavar, Ball Aerospace  
Joshua Pepper, Lehigh U  
Abigail Sheffer, NAS  
Olienka De La O Fernandez, EPCC  
Nicholas White, George Washington U  
David Millman, Bell Atlantic

Lee Curtis, AURA  
Sravani Vaddi, Arecibo Observ.  
James Lochner, USRA  
Rayan Khan, Cosmic Tribe  
Jeff Foust, SpaceNews  
Lamont Di Biasi  
Irene Klotz, Space.com

**12:02 PM ET**

### **Welcome and General Remarks – Martin Still**

Martin Still: [Slides](#)<sup>1</sup> with Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) rules were made available in advance for the Committee’s reference. The meeting agenda was constructed to enable the Committee to organize and discuss their upcoming annual report. The chair had a list of discussion topics to share.

Priya Natarajan: Welcomed attendees from the astronomy community. The goal of this meeting is to develop the annual report, referencing the Decadal Survey and its ambitious and detailed recommendations. Areas highlighted for discussion included a description of the report format, uniform federal proposer demographic data collection, and issues related to climate change and sustainability.

### **12:08 ET NSF/AST Programs and Budget Update - Debra Fischer**

[Presented](#)<sup>2</sup> on updates from the NSF/AST division, observing facilities, science, and programs to address the STEM pipeline since the last AAAC meeting in January.

### **12:23 ET NASA/APD Programs and Budget Update – Paul Hertz**

[Presented](#)<sup>3</sup> on NASA mission updates, and astrophysics research programs.

### **12:38 ET DOE/HEP Programs and Budget Update – Kathy Turner**

[Presented](#)<sup>4</sup> updates since last meeting on budget and projects.

### **12:59 ET Committee Discussions and Preparations for Annual Report Writing**

Priya Natarajan thanked the presenters for their updates. The Committee transitioned to a discussion session for the Committee’s annual report. A draft document was available online to committee members and the format for the report was briefly reviewed. The Committee was reminded that today’s meeting was to allow discussion of report themes and to make assignments for writing sections.

Alexie Leauthaud asked if the Committee needed to stay within the recommendations of the Decadal Survey. Kyle Dawson confirmed that the Committee’s charge is to recommend actionable steps to the Agencies. The recommendations could also be prioritized by importance.

Priya commented that with a 10-year window in mind, the Committee should stress the short-term priorities and focus on implementation centered on year-1 immediate actions.

Michael McCarthy expressed an interest in expanding on the point, "to what extent is it better for this Committee to prioritize a small number of key developments in the Decadal as opposed to reiterating prior recommendations?" He did not want to minimize other recommendations contained in the Decadal.

Priya suggested the meeting transition to the work that the agencies have started doing in proposer data collection and allow them to give the Committee a glimpse of the data that they can currently share.

### **13:15 ET DOE, NASA & NSF comments on Astro2020 Recommendations**

Presentation<sup>5</sup> by Kathy Turner: Path Forward for Addressing Demographics Recommendations.

Questions from committee members:

Kyle Dawson asked if Agencies would later charge the committee to form a task force to further follow up on these demographic items? Paul Hertz responded that he is looking for targeted advice to the Agencies and would want the Committee to advise on the best path forward and identify why each Agency is not able to collect more complete data like the National Institute of Health (NIH).

Priya Natarajan commented that in the absence of data yet to be delivered, it is difficult for the Committee to see what the task force might be charged to do. One area would be to better understand the NIH model to enhance work of all 3 agencies.

Michael McCarthy asked if the demographic data was available for merit review panelists? Paul Hertz suggested it be added to the Committee's spreadsheet.

Wenda Cao commented that security guidance has been issued for federal agencies to coordinate and standardize the collection of data. How might this effect the collection of demographic data? Paul responded that nothing yet has come from that guidance.

Deidre Shoemaker recommended to the Committee that guidance should be achievable regarding the collection of demographic data and Nancy Chanover recommended that the Committee report closely follow the framework of the Decadal Survey.

Kathy Turner emphasized that the collection of demographic data is now a governmentwide function.

### **13:47 ET**

Paul Hertz: asked the AAAC identify urgent actions.

### **13:55 ET**

Alexie Leauthaud offered 3 principal areas to consider:

1. Education.
2. Reducing emissions in the profession (travel, etc.).
3. Preparing for the future and impact of climate change.

Priya Natarajan concurred with Alexie's 3 points and recommended that the committee keep these points as high priority rather than a rank order.

Martin Still emphasized the deadline for the annual report is March 15<sup>th</sup>. This is a hard stop in the sense that it is required in the charge to the Committee and in Congressional legislation. In the past that deadline has not always been achieved, but it is crucial to deliver on time.

### **14:02 ET**

15-minute break.

### **14:17 ET Committee Discussions and Preparations for Annual Report Writing**

Priya Natarajan noted that it seemed that the strategy for the annual report is to outline the recommendations and elaborate on the 3 items the committee has identified. As for the data collection demonstrated by the agencies, the outline provided by the agencies for their future presentation of a spreadsheet to the committee for review is agreeable. All were invited to comment. Lab astrophysics was an additional topic added to the list to further develop.

Deidre Shoemaker agreed with Priya's assessment. Kyle Dawson also agreed that the topics highlighted are the focus of the Committee's discussion interests.

Paul Hertz indicated that NASA has augmented their Lab Astro budget as an incremental improvement but have not addressed the Decadal survey for prioritizing and addressing those needs. Peer review is currently used to prioritize, but strategic guidance is needed from the Committee.

Priya indicated that if the Committee was in general agreement of the items to include in the annual report, and access to the online draft for format and editing was available, she suggested that the meeting end early. Martin agreed that the meeting could end early.

Priya proposed a deadline for Tuesday, March 8 to enter draft comments into the report and for all to proofread the draft.

Kyle suggested each agency provide one science highlight to include in the executive summary and Priya agreed that was a good suggestion.

Martin Still wanted to bring to the Committees attention that the next meeting will be in June, and the first meeting of the 2023 committee cycle will be in September.

Kyle Dawson asked about the process for deputy committee chair assignment for next cycle. Kartik Sheth recommended an open and inclusive framework for the selection process.

Priya Natarajan thanked all in attendance, and those from agencies who presented. The meeting was adjourned.

### **Presentation slides:**

- 1) [https://www.nsf.gov/attachments/303935/public/1\\_Welcome\\_Opening\\_Remarks\\_Introductions\\_Martin\\_Still.pdf](https://www.nsf.gov/attachments/303935/public/1_Welcome_Opening_Remarks_Introductions_Martin_Still.pdf)
- 2) [https://www.nsf.gov/attachments/303935/public/4\\_NSF\\_AST\\_Program\\_Update\\_Debra\\_Fischer.pdf](https://www.nsf.gov/attachments/303935/public/4_NSF_AST_Program_Update_Debra_Fischer.pdf)
- 3) [https://www.nsf.gov/attachments/303935/public/2\\_NASA\\_Program\\_Update\\_Paul\\_Hertz.pdf](https://www.nsf.gov/attachments/303935/public/2_NASA_Program_Update_Paul_Hertz.pdf)
- 4) [https://www.nsf.gov/attachments/303935/public/3\\_DOE\\_HEP\\_Program\\_Update\\_Kathy\\_Turner.pdf](https://www.nsf.gov/attachments/303935/public/3_DOE_HEP_Program_Update_Kathy_Turner.pdf)
- 5) [https://www.nsf.gov/attachments/303935/public/5\\_DOE\\_NASA\\_NSF\\_Astro2020\\_demographic\\_recommendations\\_Kathy\\_Turner\\_Paul\\_Hertz\\_Debra\\_Fischer.pdf](https://www.nsf.gov/attachments/303935/public/5_DOE_NASA_NSF_Astro2020_demographic_recommendations_Kathy_Turner_Paul_Hertz_Debra_Fischer.pdf)