

Astronomy & Astrophysics Advisory Committee - Welcome, FACA, and Conflicts of Interest -

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THANK YOU FOR SERVING!

Advisory committees play an important role in shaping the programs and policies of the federal government.

Your deliberations and feedback, both collectively and as individuals, help our three federal agencies decide how to best use taxpayer dollars for their investment.

NSF, NASA, and DOE hope you find the experience interesting and fulfilling.

THIS IS A FACA COMMITTEE

Through enactment of the *Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) of 1972 (Public Law 92-463*)*, the U.S. Congress formally recognized the merits of seeking the advice and assistance of our nation's citizens to the executive branch of government.

FACA was enacted to ensure that advice given to federal government agencies by groups of individuals that include non-federal employees is objective and accessible to the public.

“The function of advisory committees should be advisory only, and that all matters under their consideration should be determined, in accordance with law, by the official, agency, or officer involved.”

*<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-86/pdf/STATUTE-86-Pg770.pdf#page=1>

What Does An Advisory Committee Do?

An advisory committee meets, deliberates, reaches consensus, and provides advice and/or recommendations directly to a federal agency.

At NSF we have two primary types of advisory committees.

1. Traditional” advisory committees that provide advice and/or recommendations regarding **policy matters**.
2. Merit review panels that provide recommendations regarding **grant proposals**.

You are serving on a “traditional” NSF FACA committee.

FACA PROCEDURES FOR AAAC

NSF sponsors the meeting and provides a *Designated Federal Official*.

Meetings are open to the public and announced in the Federal Register and on the AAAC website. Portions of a meeting can be closed when the information being discussed is proprietary, would constitute an invasion of privacy, and/or would frustrate proposed agency actions.

The website includes:
(<https://www.nsf.gov/mps/ast/aaac.jsp>)

- Charter
- Membership
- Subcommittees
- Annual reports
- Agenda
- Minutes
- Presentations

FACA PROCEDURES FOR AAAC

Committee members must electronically sign in at the beginning of the meeting.

Meeting attendance is recorded.

Meeting minutes are created and maintained by NSF.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND IMPARTIALITY

Committee Members have a conflict of interest or appearance of one and should recuse themselves from offering advice if they...

Are **employed at an institution** that would be affected by such advice;

Serve on the Board of Directors of an organization that would be/has an interest in the advice;

Have a **financial interest in** a company, including a contractor that would be impacted by such advice;

Have any other affiliation that gives rise to the condition that **they cannot be fully objective and unbiased**, or that another person could have reason to question their impartiality.

GIFTS

Generally, do not solicit or accept gifts and favors from any “prohibited source” – anyone who:

Seeks official action from the Agencies;

Does, or seeks to do, business with the Agencies;

Conducts activities regulated by the Agencies;

Has interests that may be substantially affected by the performance of your official duties; or

Is an organization the majority of whose members are described above.

Exceptions: when it is clear that benefits have not been offered or enhanced because of your Government status, or gifts clearly motivated by family or personal friendship

REQUIREMENTS FOR AAAC MEMBERS

Do not use your public position for private gain (whether your own or another's).

If you identify a conflict of interest for a given topic, please announce it and refrain from participating in the discussion or in the writing of the relevant section of the annual report.

Do not discuss the business of the committee outside of the AAAC forum.

Do not use or disclose non-public Government information.

Relevant “Acts” to follow

HATCH ACT

No political activity is allowed in the Federal workplace.

If you want to make a call to support a presidential candidate - **use your personal phone, on a committee break time, and disconnect from the Zoom session.**

If you want to attend a political fundraiser- **can attend only after meeting is adjourned.**

ANTI-LOBBYING ACT

Do not engage in, or encourage, lobbying during the meeting or other Government duty time.

The Act **prohibits the use of appropriated funds** (including the use of official employee time and Government resources) for activities that are intended or designed (directly or indirectly) **to influence in any manner a member of Congress** (or an official of any Federal, state, or local government) in support of or opposition to legislation or appropriations.

If you are representing your university, your professional society, or yourself to Congress - **make sure its on your own time, not using any NSF affiliation or resources.**

PURPOSE OF THIS MEETING

The Committee will hear presentations of current programming by representatives from NSF, NASA, DOE and others invited by the agencies which are relevant to astronomy and astrophysics to:

discuss current and potential areas of cooperation between the agencies, and;

formulate recommendations for continued and new areas of cooperation and mechanisms for achieving them.

AAAC Charter Duties:

(1) assess, and make recommendations regarding, the coordination of astronomy and astrophysics programs of the three agencies;

(2) assess, and make recommendations regarding, the status of the activities of the three agencies as they relate to the Astronomy Decadal Surveys; and

(3) not later than March 15 of each year, transmit a report to the heads of the three agencies, the Committee on Science of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate, and the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate.

We appreciate your time and your advice.!

QUESTIONS?

Designated Federal Official:

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