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Dr. James S. Ulvestead
Division Director, Astronomical Sciences
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4201 Wilson Boulevard
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Dear Jim,

The AURA Observatory Council (OC) recently reviewed the substantial accomplishments of NOAO during the past year and approved plans for the near future. It is vital that US astronomy remains a major participant in astronomical research in the world.

A significant component of the success of US astronomy resides in the program *Renewing Small Telescopes for Astronomical Research* (ReSTAR) which enhances the capabilities of the moderate-size telescopes in the NOAO portfolio. The ReSTAR report provides a roadmap for producing the upgraded instrumentation to enable US observatories to maintain international competitiveness. The *New Worlds, New Horizons* Decadal Survey emphasizes the continued support of ReSTAR which forms a critical element in the "OIR System" to provide open telescope access to the US community.

Phase-1 of ReSTAR is leading to substantially increased capabilities at both 4-m telescopes: the Mayall saw deployment of an upgraded wide-field optical imager, and construction of two medium resolution optical spectrographs has started for both Mayall and Blanco. A new near-IR spectrograph is planned for the Blanco. Also an upgrade to the multi-object spectrograph for Blanco is underway. In addition, time for US astronomers was purchased to enable access to the 5-m Palomar telescope. These activities are impressive and go a long way to augment US observing capabilities.

Interest for the Phase-2 proposals for ReSTAR continues to increase. A community meeting scheduled for November to detail cooperative possibilities for the second round of proposals has already drawn great interest.

The ReSTAR investment continues to improve the capabilities of astronomy in the United States. We encourage the NSF to include the third and final phase of funding for ReSTAR in its planning and allocations for astronomy and astrophysics.

ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITIES FOR RESEARCH IN ASTRONOMY, INC.

We thank you for your continued support of astronomy and our observatories.

Sincerely,

Observatory Council, AURA

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