



Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy

October 14, 2011

Dr. James S. Ulvestad
Director, Division of Astronomical Sciences
National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, Virginia 22230

Dear Jim:

The AURA Board met on September 29-30, 2011. A primary consideration before the Board centered on the attached report by the Consolidated Working Group on Gemini Governance. As noted in the report, the charge to this working group was to identify the notional organizational model that would best satisfy the recommendation made by the decadal survey for consolidating the facilities of NOAO and Gemini into a single operational structure.

Following formal acceptance of the report, Board members engaged in an extensive discussion on strategies for attracting additional input relevant to the report and initiating implementation of the preferred model. Both models described by the working group were considered in depth, recognizing that in either model significant details remain to be worked out. Ultimately, nine Board members favored the consolidated model, two favored the hybrid model and two expressed no clear preference.

The Board now wishes to move forward with the process that will lead to the further development and implementation of the fully consolidated model. In particular, the Board seeks input from the community and especially the international partners of the Gemini Observatory, regarding the development of the best paths for international input and participation in the governance of the consolidated observatory. Recognizing that input and a decision on a governance model must occur in a timely manner, the Board recommends a generous, but limited time period for input (for example, through the end of calendar year 2011). The Board is also particularly keen to hear perspectives that address mechanisms to ensure broad-based input from *all* the participating astronomy communities in setting priorities for the observatories,

After receiving this input, the AURA Board will meet in early 2012 to review the comments and make its final recommendation on consolidated NOAO and Gemini operation and governance.

Sincerely,

William Smith, President
AURA