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**University of Wisconsin-Madison**  
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30 July 2009

Dr. Craig Foltz, Acting Director  
Division of Astronomical Sciences  
National Science Foundation  
4201 Wilson Blvd.  
Arlington, VA 22230

Dear Craig:

I'm writing to report the pleasant news that the non-profit corporation Virtual Astronomical Observatory (VAO), LLC has formally appointed a Board of Directors, which I am privileged to Chair. A list of the Board members is included below.

The Board held its first meeting on July 28, 2009, and attended to a variety of matters needed to start the VAO project on its path to a working observatory. Foremost among these was the formal appointment of Dr. Robert Hanisch as the VAO Director, for a three-year term ending on September 30, 2012.

We reviewed the current state of the project and are pleased to find the program has an exciting and technically well-defined path forward for the next few years. Like all complex state-of-the art undertakings, however, there are some difficulties that will require particular attention and oversight. The Board is concerned that any further delays in the start of NSF funding will cause at least two significant problems that could jeopardize success in the current year. First, carryover funding from previous NSF investment is now exhausted, and certain key scientific and technical personnel will soon need to be reassigned and become unavailable to the program. Second, the NASA funding, which goes directly to NASA centers, for the first year has already begun, and must be expended in the current fiscal year. An awkward asynchronicity of funding thus exists between the two sponsors, which steadily grows worse, and inhibits optimal use of resources. We urge the Foundation to aid the success of the innovative VAO partnership by expediting the start of its funding.

The VAO Board of Directors is delighted to become involved in this ground-breaking project, and of course extremely grateful for the Foundation's support. We stand ready to work with AST in any way needed to bring this decades-old dream to fruition for our community. In the shorter term, a subset of the Board would like to meet with you in person shortly to discuss how to expedite Foundation funding for the VAO and to confirm that funding is feasible in this fiscal year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JS Gallagher". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font.

John S. Gallagher III  
Chair, VAO Board

Cc: VAO Board  
Robert Hanisch, STSci, Director, VAO  
Cynthia Allen, AUI, VAO LLC Secretary

Encl. VAO Board of Directors

# **VAO LLC Board of Directors**

*As of July 22, 2009*

**John (Jay) S. Gallagher, III (Chairman)**

W. W. Morgan Professor of Astronomy  
University of Wisconsin-Madison

**Roscoe C. Giles**

Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering; Deputy Director of the Center for  
Computational Science  
Boston University

**E. Scott Kirkpatrick**

Professor of Computer Science, School of Engineering and Computer Science  
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

**Bruce H. Margon**

Professor of Astronomy and Astrophysics; Vice Chancellor of Research  
University of California, Santa Cruz

**Catherine "Cathy" A. Pilachowski**

Professor and Kirkwood Chair in Astronomy  
Indiana University

**Ethan J. Schreier**

President, Associated Universities, Inc. (AUI)  
Adjunct Professor, Department of Physics and Astronomy  
The Johns Hopkins University

**William S. Smith**

President, Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy, Inc. (AURA)