July 29, 2005

Dear Colleague,

I am writing to invite you to read and comment on NOAO’s submission to NSF Astronomy’s Senior Review. We, in turn, are responding to Wayne Van Citters’ invitation to tell him how to optimize science output with limited resources. “Thus creative approaches to preserving scientific capability at lower cost to the Division could well be as important as more immediate instrument closures.”

A creative approach by the OIR community is exactly what your NOAO colleagues and I are calling for in this submission. In fact, we are proposing to close no telescopes. Instead, we are seeking partners to continue operating them. The savings will be invested in design and development of future frontier facilities.

Our partnership concept, described in the accompanying announcement, is a well tested one. The WIYN telescope is the model. WIYN has a great track record, based on a proactive Board, a Director, and a dedicated staff.

The theme of our submission is NOAO’s role in the U.S. observing system. The idea of a shared public-private system of non-redundant facilities was acclaimed in the last decadal survey. Making the system a reality is well under way, thanks in good part to the TSIP program. Strategic planning of the system remains a challenge, and we’ll continue to need your input to develop an optimum consensus plan.

Lastly, I want to emphasize our success to date with the approach described in our submission. NOAO has an important technical role in LSST: it is the telescope/site design piece of the project. NOAO has an important technical role in TMT: optical systems and site testing. Our community interface roles with these projects (and GMT), the Science Working Groups, are also vital to true public-private partnerships. NOAO is also playing its proper part in the NVO, developing the NOAO Science Archive, which is ultimately the OIR ground-based science archive.

Comments on our submission to NSF www.noao.edu/dir/seniorreview should be sent to srinput@noao.edu from where they will be forwarded to NSF. Thank you for your input.

Sincerely

Jeremy Mould