# Committee on Astronomy and Astrophysics Concluding Session: Discussion Topics

March 24-26, 2026 | Space Science Week

# National Science Foundation | Astronomy Section & Facilities

- Congress's recent direction to NSF to advance both US-ELT projects to the Final Design Phase is important
- Success of science from Antarctica depends on clear communications between facilities or projects in Antarctica and the Office of Polar Programs (OPP), especially with infrastructure sorely lacking and concern expressed in language from FY26 appropriations. OPP's implementation of the South Pole Station Master Plan is important for Astro2020 decadal priorities, including those related to CMB science
- Potential for efficient management of astronomy facilities through new Office of Research Infrastructure is encouraging, particularly if this allows Astronomy and Astrophysics Research Grants (AAG) Program to grow and if connection between facilities and research programs remains strong. More information on trends in AAG funding and success rates are needed, especially as these trends are intertwined with workforce development
- Multi-agency and cross-divisional interaction, such as between NASA Astrophysics Division and NSF Astronomy and Physics sections, is key, particularly for multi-messenger science
- More information about impact of NSF's reorganization on Major Research Instrumentation and Mid-scale Research Infrastructure programs is needed
- Timescale and methods by which community can inform potential extended missions or upgrades to Vera C. Rubin Observatory is worthy of exploration and further discussion to understand potential future of observatory following primary 10-year survey

# Department of Energy | Office of Science | Cosmic Frontier Program

- Additional details are needed on how, within context of Cosmic Frontier program, new or rapid DOE initiatives that support science activities (e.g., Genesis Mission) are responsive to community-based strategic planning already provided by Decadal process
- Support of CMB science through South Pole Observatory and potential support for a possible DESI-II are significant for Astro2020 priorities for ground-based astronomy
- Additional details are needed on how recently announced merger of High Energy Physics and Nuclear Physics programs will impact Cosmic Frontier program and related priorities from Astro2020
- Additional clarity is needed on potential impacts across Cosmic Frontier program portfolio in implementing the Genesis Mission

# NASA | Astrophysics Division (APD)

- Guidance provided to community to begin preparations for next decadal review, including recently announced Astrophysics Strategic Technology & Research Accelerator (ASTRA) initiative, is appreciated
- Actively maintaining the health of the Explorers program, with its full range of missions (SmallSats, SMEX, MIDEX) and regular cadence as recommended by Astro2020 is crucial
- Multi-agency and cross-divisional interaction, such as between NASA Astrophysics Division and NSF Astronomy and Physics sections, is key, particularly for multi-messenger science
- NASA APD honoring commitments to international projects (e.g., LISA) is very weclome news
- Following a decision on Probes, a review of Probe selection process and lessons learned is needed
- Impending *Swift* boost mission is an excellent example of NASA partnering with commercial space companies in pursuit of extending astronomical space capabilities, and it will be important to understand what lessons can be applied to other NASA space science satellites
- Understanding workforce changes across agency (e.g., centers, HQ, JPL), and mitigating concerns that changes may hamper the ability to implement decadal recommendations is critical. Some activities to understand and mitigate impacts are underway

# Dark & Quiet Skies for Astronomy: Joint Session with Committee on Radio Frequencies

- Concern from many groups about growing impacts of interference from satellites and other services on existing and planned radio telescope facilities that are critical to addressing Astro2020 priorities
- Ongoing efforts to explore protecting far side of the Moon from radio frequency interference in support of future radio astronomy efforts on Moon are important, especially given NASA's recent announcement of Ignition initiative
- Best ways to engage on issue of optical and infrared (OIR) interference? Potential for satellite constellations with a million satellites represents an existential threat to astronomy, and ground-based OIR astronomy in particular. Unlike at radio frequencies where Federal Communications Commission has regulatory authority, there currently exists no obvious equivalent for OIR portion of electromagnetic spectrum
- Immense efforts by a dedicated group of volunteers who monitor and take action on behalf of dark and quiet skies

# STEM Education, Outreach, and Workforce Development

- NASA's commitment to STEM education and outreach, which comprises Science Activation, NASA internships and related center-based programs is commendable. Together these efforts extend across all ages of learners and public
- DOE is committed to its Workforce Development for Teachers and Scientists program to support internships and mentoring is likewise commendable
- Outreach and communication experts (e.g. from Science Friday and Yerkes Observatory) stress importance of scientists themselves communicating directly with public and receiving training to do so
- Good work by the American Astronomical Society and the American Institute of Physics to track at multiple levels state of astronomy and astrophysics workforce is appreciated