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**American Astronomical Society Releases Statement on the  
NSF Astronomy Senior Review Report**

The American Astronomical Society, the largest professional organization for research astronomers in the United States has issued a statement on the recently released National Science Foundation Division of Astronomical Sciences Senior Review report. The report, entitled “From the Ground Up: Balancing the NSF Astronomy Program” was completed on October 22, 2006.

AAS President, J. Craig Wheeler said, “The Astronomy Division of the National Science Foundation faces a future in which the operating expenses for greatly-needed new facilities – Atacama Large Millimeter Array (ALMA) in the sub-millimeter, Giant Segmented Mirror Telescope (GSMT) and Large Survey Telescope (LST) in the optical, and the Advanced Technology Survey Telescope (ATST) to study the Sun in unprecedented depth - could each consume annual funds comparable to the whole current individual grants program. The Senior Review was a necessary and conscientious exercise to see where programs might be pruned so that new growth can occur. It is also incumbent on Congress to keep the NSF, including the Astronomy Division, on a competitive path of growth that balances current and future needs.”

AAS CAPP chair Jack Burns continued, “The Senior Review completed one of the key recommendations of the last Decadal Survey -- namely, a review of current NSF-funded national observatories. The issue is one of balance in funding between current telescopes such as Gemini, telescopes under construction such as ALMA, and planned new telescopes such as LST. The Blandford Committee faced a daunting task in evaluating the relative merits of these diverse observatories. The process of soliciting input via town halls was excellent and provided essential input for the Senior Review. I hope that the astronomical community will rally in support of this process of community evaluation and ranking as it has traditionally with the Decadal Surveys. We must demonstrate a

capability for making tough choices so that we might better justify new funding for the next generation of astronomical telescopes.”

**American Astronomical Society Statement  
on the  
National Science Foundation’s Division of Astronomical Sciences  
Senior Review Report**

Astronomy is in the midst of a vibrant period of discovery from exoplanets to dark energy. We are poised for dramatic advances in our understanding of the Universe and our place within it. Realizing this potential requires continual life-cycle investment in increasingly complex and expensive NSF-supported ground-based facilities while maintaining basic grant support. Fiscal constraints limit our ability to initiate new projects and to operate all existing facilities at their current levels of support. Acknowledging this reality, the most recent Decadal Survey recommended that NSF competitively review all its older facilities every five years.

Eighteen months ago, the NSF appointed a distinguished Senior Review Committee, led by Roger Blandford, to carry out the first such review. The committee has done an exemplary job of discharging its responsibility by gathering input broadly, including from both policy makers and facilities management, holding numerous town meetings, and clearly formulating its standards of evaluation.

The American Astronomical Society commends the NSF for implementing the Decadal Survey recommendation and for creating an open and transparent process that permitted full community participation. On behalf of the astronomy community, we thank Roger Blandford and his committee for carrying out this important task with great care and thoughtfulness.

To enable the NSF to undertake exciting new projects on the frontiers of astronomy, the Senior Review made recommendations that, if implemented, will cause hardship for some. The AAS urges our community to join with the Astronomy Division of the NSF to present a common front as we plan for a strong future in the context of both the Senior Review and opportunities such as the American Competitiveness Initiative.