

FROM THE CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE ON ASTRO2010

January 22, 2009

Colleagues:

Although my first bulletin went out only ten days ago, a lot has been happening and many questions have been asked. It is already time for a second bulletin.

Both NRC staff and committee members have been working to present all the information we can on the Astro2010 web site and in the clearest way possible. We encourage you to become familiar with the details of the survey structure, input processes, and time line.

We know that many of you are hard at work on science white papers and the questions that have arisen about them are being addressed as they come in a "Frequently Asked Questions" page on the Astro2010 website. If you have a question that has not yet been addressed, then please do contact us by emailing your question to [astro2010@nas.edu](mailto:astro2010@nas.edu) and your email will be answered as soon as possible.

To be clear, the intent of the science white paper call is to gather your opinions on the forefronts of our science program, especially the key questions and growth areas. The Science Frontier Panels must consider the science program before we set about prioritizing "activities". We also expect that the science chapter of our final report will be a reference point for the smaller-scale activities that we will not necessarily prioritize but leave to peer review processes, as well as changing circumstances during the decade regarding the larger scale activities.

Please do try to collaborate. A single, carefully argued white paper endorsed by many active scientists will be more influential than numerous submissions making similar superficial points! The submission window is Feb 9-15.

Many of you have asked about how to send opinions on major policy issues and cross-cutting activities like computing and public outreach. The State of the Profession subcommittee is charged with considering these matters and will shortly issue a call for position papers. The data and information this subcommittee will gather with the help of a set of study groups that are being appointed now will motivate our recommendations on how the general infrastructure should develop over the next decade as well as providing an important input to the activity prioritization process.

On the Program Prioritization subcommittee, we have made a good start to the process with 172 responses to the call for Notices of Interest (NOI). (These can be inspected on the Astro2010 website.) We thank you for this response which is helpful for our planning purposes and, in case any one had any doubts, demonstrates the vitality and opportunity of our field. Our plan going forward is to issue requests for more detailed information from activities in a two-stage process that will be announced shortly on the website.

In addition, we will issue a call for technology development white papers that may be mission-specific or cross-cutting in nature (with technology development policy issues more appropriately directed to the State of the Profession subcommittee's calls for policy position papers). Details will appear shortly, again on the website.

In looking at the scope of the survey, I want to issue a clarification that following discussions with NASA it has been decided that the Particle Astrophysics and Gravitation Panel will prioritize free-flying space missions that are testing fundamental gravitational physics.

We have heard about several town halls that will be held over the next three months and these are now advertised on the website. Thanks to the organizers. Please do try to attend and give us your feedback while it is still possible to influence our process.

On behalf of the Astro2010 Survey Committee, thank you for your input so far. Please continue to support this process. The prioritization of our field is more important than ever before given current circumstances and so it is important that our final report be as strong and as well argued as it can be and that it have the support of the entire community.

Sincerely,

Roger Blandford  
Committee on Astro2010, Chair