

Astro2010 Chair's Bulletin #6
April 9 2009

Colleagues:

This remains a time of intense activity for Astro2010. The memberships for all the Program Prioritization Panels (PPPs) have now been approved and will be announced shortly on the survey's web site. The Science Frontier Panels have begun their second round of meetings and are hard at work digesting the science white paper contents as they draft their science programs. It was especially gratifying to see how many postdocs were contributing to formulating a program that they will inherit. Other deadlines have passed. There are 69 State of the Profession Position Papers and many of them raise important issues for policy and planning exercises such as this one. This outcome alone justifies the call that we made. Everything that we have received will be fully considered, in many cases by more than one Study Group. In addition, over 70 white papers on Technology Development, Laboratory Astrophysics, Theory, and Computation have been submitted. Finally we have received over 100 responses to the Request For Information (RFI) from activities. Thanks to all who have put so much thought and effort into the near 600 responses to the Astro2010 solicitations.

The responses to the RFI will be used by the PPPs to make an evaluation of each proposed activity's state of maturity and scale which will help guide the selection of activities invited to present to the PPP in person June 8-11 in Pasadena. Activity teams selected to participate in the committee's independent cost estimation process will be asked to submit a response to a second, more technically detailed RFI later in the process (Summer 2009). Activity teams not selected to participate in the June meeting or the cost estimation process will continue to be considered throughout the entire survey process on the basis of the RFI responses we have just received. Should the PPPs have any follow up queries for these projects, the panels will request further written input as necessary.

There have been several highly successful community-led Town Halls and they have raised new and more clearly articulated questions for the Committee, Panels, and Study Groups to address. We all appreciate those who went to the trouble to organize and report on these meetings. If you plan to attend one of the upcoming Town Halls, do look at the writeups from past meetings as well as the suggested discussion topics listed on the Astro2010 website.

One consequence of all of this activity, for astronomers on and off the Committee and Panels, has been an enhanced awareness and understanding of what our colleagues with interests quite different from our own are doing. My own visits to the sites of active and planned observatories are revealing how much we owe as a community to those with the vision and experience to create and maintain front rank observing facilities and how many of these facilities rely upon successful collaborations involving international and private partners. Although Astro2010 will be a U.S. report addressed to U.S.

agencies, it has to be carried out in this larger context. For this reason the Astro2010 Committee has already started studying the strategic plans of other countries.

For the immediate future, though, our main task is to absorb all of your new input in time for our next full committee meeting in May, where the PPPs will meet for the first time. The May meeting will be closed in its entirety to allow the PPP process get going. The June meetings of the PPPs (Pasadena CA, June 8-11, 2009) will have several open sessions, the agendas for which will be posted in late May.

Let me conclude by, once again, thanking everyone who is participating in this process for their thought and effort over the past few months and, in anticipation, for your contributions over the months ahead.

Sincerely,
Roger Blandford, Chair
Astro2010