

NRAO Response to ANASAC Report
October 2007

We would like to express our sincere thanks to the ANASAC for their critical input into ALMA and ALMA North American operations. We know these kinds of extracurricular tasks can be time consuming and distracting from your primary duties. However, you should feel confident that you are performing a key service to the US astronomical community.

We also thank Jonathan Williams for his service as Chair of the ANASAC for the last 1+ years. Jonathan saw the ANASAC through the key transition to a formal charge and response format, and he has led the committee effectively in their deliberations on the difficult, but important, issue of User grants.

The ANASAC addressed four charges:

1. ALMA User Grants Program
2. Terms of Reference
3. Science Workshop 2008
4. Membership

Following are specific responses to the ANASAC report on the 4 charges.

Charge 1: ALMA User Grants Program

We thank the ANASAC and the charge I subcommittee for their in-depth consideration of the User grants issue. We re-emphasize that this is a community issue, and the ANASAC, as the main mechanism for community input into ALMA operations, should take the lead on addressing this issue. We also thank the NSF for being present, and for their clarifying remarks.

In response to the specific ANASAC recommendations:

1. NRAO will assist the ANASAC in assembling information on the impact of user grants on scientific output, starting with an analysis of the impact of student funding at NRAO facilities. We will also generate a report on the funding mechanisms available to support international partners.

2. NRAO will make every attempt to work with the NSF, and their proposed working group on User grants, as suggested by the ANASAC.
3. NRAO will support a survey of the AAS on the grants issue, although we recommend that the survey originate from the ANASAC.
4. Open Skies: The current time assignment policy under consideration for ALMA is to have a single Program Review Committee (currently excluding Chile, but discussion to include Chile is still ongoing) that ranks all proposals scientifically.

Monitoring assigned observing time among the partners to assure there is appropriate proportion of the allocated time is part of the scheduling process. Since the apportioning of time to each region happens at the scheduling stage, the Open Skies policy in North America would not distort the proper NA share of the observing time on ALMA. It only means that astronomers from countries not currently part of the official ALMA project can apply for time and any assigned time will be charged to the NA share. However, we can expect that in the end, the time given to astronomers from countries not part of the ALMA project would be shared by all regions. In other words, the Open Skies Policy could very well be adopted by the Joint ALMA Observatory eventually.

5. We applaud the ANASAC for their discussion at the meeting concerning participation of astronomy in the ACI increases at the NSF. A few points we would like to make are that:

(i) astronomy is clearly the leader in terms of public awareness and inspiration of the scientific endeavor, and in terms of the great importance of building a scientific and technical workforce, astronomy is one of the major factors in attracting bright students to science and engineering, and

(ii) astronomy pushes the leading edge of technology in a wide range of areas, and many advances in modern society have come from astronomy, perhaps the best example of which is the digital camera. NRAO has put together a brochure about the impact of radio astronomy development on general technological development in society. We would be happy to share this memo with you. It is important that the entire astronomy community, perhaps most

effectively via the AAS, engages in both communicating and actually initiating activities to enhance competitiveness and innovation.

(iii) We will work with the other observatories to make a more general case for the impact of astronomy on modern society.

Charge 2: Terms of Reference

NRAO agrees with having the ANASAC be an important conduit for getting North American community input into the Board charges to the ASAC. We also agree with the consensus that this input is not appropriate for the final ANASAC report to NRAO, since the information may be proprietary, and hence not suited for a public document, and that the charges being considered are Board charges and not NRAO charges. However, the ANASAC should feel free to mention their input in the in final verbal summary to NRAO, if they feel appropriate. It was recognized that addressing both the NRAO charges and the Board charges face-to-face is probably beyond a single-day meeting, and we will plan for a 1.5 day meeting in subsequent years. We will also have to adjust the teleconference schedule to allow for adequate input into ALMA Board charges to ASAC that fall outside of the time-frame of the annual ANASAC face-to-face meeting.

We attach the revised ToR at the end of this response.

Charge 3: Science Workshop 2008

The recommendations are very reasonable. We will consider these topics internally, and make a recommendation before the end of September.

Charge 4: Membership

We will maintain the scientific breadth, and size, of the committee in the upcoming ANASAC appointments. We also welcome the opportunity of working with Andrew Baker as new chair. Andrew has been one of the most active members of the ANASAC.

To replace the members rotating off the ANASAC, and after considerable consultation, the NRAO Director has appointed: Michael Fall (STScI), Tim Heckman (JHU), Sharda Jogee (UT Austin), and Xavier Prochaska (UC Santa Cruz) as new members.

Since Paul Ho is now on the ALMA Board representing East Asia, he will rotate off the ANASAC. As the agreement to have Taiwan join ALMA_NA will be signed by the end of 2007, a new member from Taiwan will be appointed to the ANASAC.

Sincerely yours,

Fred Lo
NRAO Director

Chris Carilli
NAASC AD