



National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, Virginia 22230

October 20, 2010

Dr. Wendy Freedman, Chair, Giant Magellan Telescope Board
Dr. Henry Yang, Chair, Thirty Meter Telescope Board

Dear Drs. Freedman and Yang,

I am writing this letter to you as respective chairs of the Boards of the Giant Magellan Telescope (GMT) and the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT), to inform you of a change in oversight arrangements from the NSF Division of Astronomical Sciences (AST). Since a 2007 agreement, the Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy (AURA) has performed program management oversight of the Giant Segmented Mirror Telescope (GSMT) development for AST. This has included distribution to the GMT and TMT projects of development funding allocated by AST, collection and submission of annual project reports, implementation of the GSMT Community Assessment Review, and attendance at project board meetings and other functions.

In August, the Astro2010 decadal survey recommended that AST make an “immediate” selection for federal investment in either GMT or TMT. Such a step may result in a federal partnership with GMT or TMT, and this partnership may be executed in cooperation with the National Optical Astronomy Observatory (NOAO) or a successor organization. In order to preserve the option for future participation by AURA in a GSMT program, and to avoid a potential conflict of interest, it seems prudent to revise the GSMT oversight. With this letter, we are ending the formal role for AURA; we have named Dr. Donald Terndrup as the AST program officer for GSMT, responsible for AST oversight of both the GMT and TMT projects.

Scientific and technical interactions with NOAO staff members may have proven valuable to the GMT and TMT projects during the past several years. We encourage continuation of these interactions in order to facilitate project development and efficient cooperation in the future. However, we emphasize that the continuation of these interactions is at the discretion of the projects, and should no longer be considered part of an AURA oversight function for GSMT.

AST looks forward to the continued development of the GMT and TMT projects, and we stand ready to answer any questions you may have regarding the change in oversight responsibilities.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'James S. Ulvestad'.

James S. Ulvestad
Director, Division of Astronomical Sciences

Cc: Dr. William Smith, President, AURA ↓
Dr. Donald Terndrup, AST
Dr. Edward Seidel, Assistant Director, NSF MPS Directorate