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Re: Meeting #12 of the SOFIA Science Users Group:

The SOFIA Science Users Group (SUG) met at NASA Ames Research Center during 16 November 2017. This meeting was supported by the full committee. The focus of this meeting is reflected by the agenda and presentations that are available on-line. Impressions and recommendations of the SUG resulting from discussion of these presentations with SOFIA staff follow (in no order):

The SUG appreciates the resiliency that the Program has shown in coping with technical difficulties over the past year which have impacted the dispatch rate that was realized during Cycle 5. We concur with the strategy of optimizing flight-scheduling algorithms to TAC-assigned scientific priority and development of short-term flight scheduling tools that are geared toward completion of high priority projects in the face of lost flights. We congratulate the Program on the first short-term deployment to Daytona FL and look forward to further utilization of this approach to enabling high priority projects. We further congratulate the SMOC team on completion of the Cycle 6 solicitation for observing proposals and the community response to it (4X oversubscription).

The SOFIA instrument program is on a positive trend with several achievements over the past year including: resolution of the HAWC+ acoustic coupling issue, commissioning of 4Great, integration of the dual cryo-cooler system, and a clear process for retirement of underproductive instruments. The HIRMES instrument development continues on track. We concur with the legacy science approach of the next generation instrument solicitation that has been released for comment through NSPIRES. We suggest that the SOFIA instrument page include information about instruments in development as well as upcoming solicitations.

Staffing challenges in the SMOC remain a concern and may be on a worsening trend. We suggest that the Project explore social media as a means to give more exposure to job advertisements. Subsequent reposting in this media can yield highly targeted exposure to relevant communities.

We concur with the Program's plan to ask the SMOC to provide written evaluation of the current Water Vapor Monitor (WVM) applicability to calibration of each instrument. We appreciate the difficulty of the WVM problem and agree that an instrument-by-instrument evaluation of its utility may be the best way to prioritize and focus ongoing effort to improve it.

Maximizing publication of existing good data over the next eighteen months leading up to the Astrophysics Senior Review is a key focus area for the Project. The SUG concurs with the following idea that developed organically during the meeting. It was suggested that the SMOC convene invitation-only meetings with travel support that are geared toward giving PIs who are holding data that the SMOC believes should be publishable, hands-on support toward getting their papers out. We suspect that this effort may have two-fold benefit, yielding both an uptick in publications and insight into the PI experience that may facilitate development of effective data reduction cook books and user tools.

We note that special journal issues dedicated to SOFIA have worked well in stimulating the investigator community

to get their papers submitted in a timely fashion. We suggest that the Project consider a special issue in a rapid publication journal such as ApJ Letters or perhaps a bundled release of articles on Astro-ph.

We believe that the Projects structured approach toward developing the Senior Review proposal is well conceived. We look forward to helping it succeed.

We thank Jean Chiar for her years of service to the SUG. We ask that the Project consider the current lack of gender diversity on this committee in their effort to name a replacement.

We thank the Project for clear concise presentations and we appreciate the effort that went into producing them.

Sincerely,

Matt Greenhouse
Chair: SOFIA Science Users Group