

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20550

January 16, 1981



OFFICE OF THE
DIRECTOR

Honorable George E. Brown, Jr.
Chairman, Subcommittee on Science,
Research and Technology
Committee on Science and Technology
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Mr. Brown:

This letter concerns the directives of Sec. 11(b)(1) and (2) of P.L. 96-480, the Stevenson-Wydler Technology Innovation Act of 1980.

As you know, Sec. 11(b)(1) requires that each federal laboratory establish an Office of Research and Technology Applications. According to the definition of "federal laboratory" in the legislation, this requirement applies to the six national Centers supported by the National Science Foundation--the National Astronomy and Ionosphere Center, the National Radio Astronomy Observatory, Kitt Peak National Observatory, Cerro Tololo Inter-American Observatory, Sacramento Peak Observatory, and the National Center for Atmospheric Research. Each of these Centers is establishing such an Office.

In addition, Sec. 11(b)(1) directs that each Federal laboratory with an annual budget exceeding \$20 million shall provide one full-time professional staff person for its Office of Research and Technology Applications. The Act permits [Sec. 11(b)(2)] agency heads to waive this requirement and submit an explanation to Congress.

NSF has two Centers with annual budgets exceeding \$20 million--the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) in Boulder, Colorado, and the National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO) with headquarters in Charlottesville, Virginia. NCAR carries out considerable, broadly-based, activities in research applications. In addition to establishing an Office of Research and Technology Applications, NCAR will designate a full-time professional to oversee these activities. With respect to NRAO, however, I am waiving this requirement.

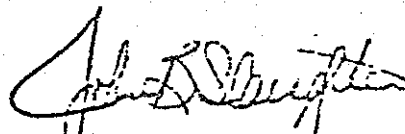
NRAO currently carries out technology transfer activities and will continue to do so. Designs for telescopes, equipment, and instrumentation have been provided to industrial organizations. The most recent example concerns the design for the 25-meter diameter antenna for the Very Large Array, for which E-Systems, Inc., of Dallas, Texas, has received a non-exclusive license.

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Using that design, E-Systems has produced several antennas for customers around the world. In another case, Perkin-Elmer of Norwalk, Connecticut, has developed a basic 36-inch telescope produce line based on a design originated at one of the other Centers. I might also note that the engineering staff of all the Centers are encouraged to publish articles on technical innovations. All technical drawings and plans are available at cost to all U.S. organizations.

These activities tend, however, to be highly specialized cases because of the nature of astronomical research. They do not require or lend themselves to a professional devoting his or her full time to them. Mechanisms are already in place to ensure that information about engineering and technical developments of potential use to others reaches them in timely and understandable form. Further action may involve various different offices in the NRAO management, depending on the particular kind of technology transfer that is occurring. All of these activities will continue. The allocation of one full-time professional to oversee them has been deemed unnecessary, however, and would be detrimental to the operations of the Center, which are already tightly constrained in terms of personnel.

Sincerely yours,



John B. Slaughter
Director

Copy to:
Dr. Paul Maxwell