

SIRTF User's Panel (SUP)
Meeting #4
2000 March 16-17

Report submitted by Steve Strom (Chair)

The SUP met on 16-17 MAR 2000. SUP invested a considerable portion of its time reviewing the status of the Legacy Science Call for Proposals (CP), and technical support for the Legacy call. The SUP also reviewed progress in developing the First Light Survey (FLS).

(1) The progress made in developing: (a) a deep understanding of SIRTF instruments, their operations modes and calibration and, (b) the pipelines for processing key observing modes has been impressive. We are also pleased to note the continued success in developing close partnerships with members of the GTO teams. This progress promises outstanding support for Legacy teams and early GO science.

(2) We urge that SUP be kept closely abreast of progress in developing the SIRTF Planning Observations Tool (SPOT). The early availability of a capable SPOT package will be of critical importance to planning both Legacy and early GO programs. The SSC staff has made outstanding progress toward developing SPOT and SUP wishes to recognize the tremendous effort which has self-evidently been made.

Based on careful review and testing by the Community Task Force, SUP notes that the addition of visualization tools to SPOT would significantly enhance its utility. A tool to optimize mapping strategies for regions of different size and at different ecliptic latitudes would represent one example to which we would give high priority. We do recognize, however, that both schedule and manpower to develop SPOT are tight. We urge that SSC work with SUP and CTF to develop a structured, prioritized input regarding the tools that would bring the maximum benefit to observation planning achievable within available resources.

(3) SUP applauds SSC efforts to structure a Legacy program that promises both to maximize early SIRTF science return AND provide coherent databases that should catalyze a wide range of GO programs.

SUP was concerned, however, by the report from SSC that suggested the possibility of far greater emphasis on "second look" opportunities for Legacy teams. To our mind, this represents a significant change from earlier expectations. Continued widespread support of Legacy rests on the shared belief that a Legacy Program in its entirety will produce products (databases; software; demonstration of unique capabilities) that stimulate and/or enable further science by the broad community of potential General Observers.

To mitigate our concern, we urge that SSC review the draft call for Legacy proposals with the goal of inserting language that makes clear the need to propose a Legacy Program which, IN ITS ENTIRETY, is aligned with the goals of the program. Such language might include the suggestion that “second look observations not primarily designed to provide a coherent database with high potential to enable follow-on observations with SIRTf might more properly be proposed as a GO program.”

Another option would be to compress the time between initial and second look observations rather than stretching Legacy Programs over two observing cycles. Having a coherent databases comprising “first” and “second” look data available quickly would serve the Legacy goals of stimulating science by the broad community via the examples and databases provided by the Legacy teams.

(4) SUP also wishes to urge that the Call for Proposals require Legacy Teams to provide coherent, well structured, and well-documented databases that can be of immediate use in planning GO proposals. Where a Legacy Team proposes to develop a significant software enhancement to the pipeline data processing provided by SSC, SUP believes strongly that the data products deriving from higher level processing be available to the community in a timely manner.

(5) The SSC staff has done a superb job in taking a leadership role in developing a First Light Survey for SIRTf. They deserve both high marks and THANKS for accepting and meeting the challenge. SSC and its partners in the community (NOAO, NRAO, SDSS) are to be commended for making the FLS a truly panchromatic survey which promises significant benefit to the community.

(6) SUP wishes to urge that SSC work with both the Panel and the SIRTf Oversight Committee to develop one or more mechanisms for formal liaison between the groups. There are a number of policy issues that affect users, and user issues that affect policy; hence the need.

(7) As the pace of activities at SSC and in the SIRTf Project continues to accelerate, SUP wishes to suggest the importance of meeting more frequently -- with the goal of convening once each semester during 2001.

We therefore plan a telecon on or around 01 AUG. At that time, we plan to ask for an update from SSC on key issues, and a report from SSC and CTF regarding progress on SPOT tool development. Our next meeting will take place during the first week of December, 2000.

(8) SUP also wishes to ensure that the scope of its activities is appropriate as SIRTf approaches launch and early operation. Toward that end, we plan to review our current charge, and provide comments and suggested changes to the SSC director and staff before 01 MAY. We expect to discuss any possible changes with SSC management prior to our DEC 2000 meeting with the goal of identifying issues (if any) for discussion at that time.

(9) SUP believes it important that a summary of each meeting be made available to the community. To that end, we urge that SSC make the report available on its website no later than one month following each SUP meeting.

(10) The SUP discussed with the SIRTF director how to broaden and reinvigorate its membership by establishing a policy for rotation. It agrees with the Director that it is appropriate for about 3 members of the committee to change each year. We also urge that applications for community membership in SUP be solicited in order to ensure broad representation.

(11) Finally, we wish to thank the SSC staff for the superb, well-organized, professional quality of the presentations, and for the well-structured briefing book. The combination made our task both more efficient and pleasurable!

If possible, we urge that as much presentation material as possible be made available electronically approximately one week prior to each SUP meeting so that SUP can engage in constructive discussions regarding key issues.

In addition, pointers to software packages, tools, etc. should be provided so that SUP members can familiarize themselves with new and changing capabilities prior to the meeting.