Dear Rocky:

Please find attached the Final Report of the Yerkes Study Group. It describes our views of the merits of a set of options that the University of Chicago could pursue.

As mentioned in the letter accompanying the earlier Interim Report, in the summer we were considering a full-scale study of the costs of the programs outlined in the Interim Report; how these programs would be funded; and how the programs would be managed. As we acknowledged, such a detailed study would require hiring an expert in creating new ventures.

At about the same time the possibility of a significant participation by Aurora University became apparent. If Aurora were to assume the principal management functions, then it is evident that they should be full participants in any cost/funding/management discussions. Thus this report is relatively brief, sketching out the basic attributes of the options, in the expectation that subsequent discussions will naturally evolve to focus the management plan.

An example of this process is the need to have a reliable number for the cost of upgrading the main Yerkes building to serve its new role as a science education center. Aurora University has taken the lead in identifying firms that can undertake this study. We should proceed to fund the study.
At our meeting in September, we discussed a promising opportunity ("Fablab") that enables students to design and fabricate scientific instruments. Fablab works by adapting CAD technology to a school or community environment via a special user interface. The Fablab idea originated at MIT, and there are now several operating Fablabs around the world, including one at the Museum of Science and Industry. By operating a Fablab at Yerkes, students could experience the full cycle of research: instead of just using telescopes, they could build the instrument that they use for the collection of data. The appeal of this vision is that we include engineering with the astronomy, and we promote some clearly adaptable career skills. Including Fablab would give Yerkes a "brand name," distinguishing it from other science education centers and observatories. A number of faculty at the University of Chicago are excited about the outreach potential of this idea. Perhaps the nature of a future participation of the University of Chicago could include the development of this aspect of Yerkes, say in either Option 1 or Option 3 as discussed in the Final Report.

While we believe that this Final Report completes the formal Charge of the YSG, please let us know if there are particular issues we can help address.

Best regards,

Richard Kron

for the Yerkes Study Group