

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

Dr. Margaret Leinen
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26 April 2004

Dear Dr. Leinen

The Advisory Committee for Environmental Research and Education (AC-ERE) commends the work of the Committee of Visitors (COV) for their excellent assessment of the Biocomplexity in the Environment (BE) priority area competition. While the AC-ERE believes the BE program was a success and provides a pathfinder model for future cross-directorate interdisciplinary programs, we remain concerned with specific management challenges that the COV identified. Of particular concern is the need to ensure coordination among the topical team leaders and the various program managers, and the increased workload that arises with cross-directorate initiatives.

The AC-ERE recognizes that fully integrating interdisciplinary research and education into the operations of the Foundation's program is a long-term goal of the Foundation that will be eventually realized when interdisciplinary science and engineering is funded directly within directorates. Nonetheless, before that goal is ultimately achieved, the AC-ERE believes there will be an important near term need for other initiatives similar to BE. The lessons learned from the BE experience clearly suggest that future cross directorate priority areas will need to consider more effective modes of management and funding. The AC-ERE is especially gratified with the COV's identification of the need to sharpen a focus on Criterion 2 of the NSF proposal requirements. Doing so would position BE to take the lead in strengthening NSF's commitment to its broader educational mission. Within that context we look forward to increased attention to opportunities to increase diversity within the enterprise.

Congratulations to the National Science Foundation for showing leadership in this important area of environmental research and education; and no amount of praise is enough for such a dedicated staff. As research results from funded BE projects move into publication, we fully expect to see increasingly widespread enthusiasm within the community for more of these kinds of initiatives.



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Sincerely,

David L. Skole
Chair, AC-ERE

cc: Advisory Committee, Environmental Research and Education
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