

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
4201 Wilson Boulevard
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22230

October 27, 2006



OFFICE OF POLAR PROGRAMS

Dr. Margaret Rees
Assoc. Vice President for Research
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
4505 Maryland Parkway
Box 4505-2040
Las Vegas, NV 89154

Dear Dr. Rees:

Thank you for agreeing to chair the 2006 Committee of Visitors (COV) for the Division of Antarctic Sciences (ANT). The COV Review will convene at 8 am at the NSF in Arlington, Virginia, on November 6 - 7, 2006 in Building Stafford II, Room 555. The COV is an *ad hoc* subcommittee of the Office of Polar Programs Advisory Committee (OAC).

By NSF policy, each program that awards grants and cooperative agreements must be reviewed at three-year intervals by a COV comprised of qualified external experts. NSF relies on their judgment to maintain high standards of program management, to provide advice for continuous improvement of NSF performance, and to ensure openness to the research and education community served by the Foundation. Reports generated by COVs are used in assessing agency progress in order to meet government-wide performance reporting requirements, and are made available to the public. The COV is charged to address and prepare a report on:

- the integrity, efficacy, and quality of processes used to solicit, review, recommend, and document proposal actions and monitor project activities
- the quality and significance of the results of the Division's programmatic investments
- the Division's balance and priorities
- the relationship between award decisions, program goals, and Foundation-wide programs and strategic goals
- any other issues that the COV feels are relevant to the review.

Decisions to award or decline proposals are ultimately made by NSF staff, based on evaluations by qualified reviewers who reflect the breadth and diversity of the proposed activities and the community. Systematic examination by the COV of a wide range of funding decisions by the COV provides an independent mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the overall quality of the Division's decisions on proposals, program management and processes, and results. The review will assess operations of individual programs in ANT as well as the Division as a whole

for three fiscal years: FY 2004, FY 2005, and FY 2006. The ANT programs under review include:

- The Aeronomy and Astrophysics Program
- The Biology & Medicine Program
- The Geology & Geophysics Program
- The Glaciology Program
- The Ocean & Climate Systems Program.

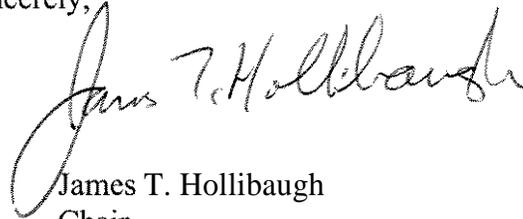
A draft of the report will be completed during the COV meeting. I ask that you finalize and submit the final report to Dr. James T. Hollibaugh, Chair of the Office of Polar Programs Advisory Committee within 30 days of the COV meeting. Dr. Hollibaugh will forward the report to the Director of the Office of Polar Programs with any comments that the Office of Polar Programs Advisory Committee may have. In accordance with NSF policy, the Office of Polar programs will provide a response setting forth any actions to be taken on each suggestion or recommendation. Both the COV report and the Office of Polar Programs response will be forwarded to the Director of the NSF.

Thank you again for your willingness to participate in this important activity. I look forward to seeing you at the meeting.



Michael L. Van Woert
Executive Officer
Office of Polar Programs

Sincerely,



James T. Hollibaugh
Chair
OPP Advisory Committee

Enclosures:

1. List of Members of ANT COV 2006
2. COV Core Questions and Template