

**Directorate for Biological Sciences**  
**Office of the Assistant Director**

**MEMORANDUM**

DATE: January 10, 2020  
TO: Office of Integrative Activities  
FROM: Joanne Tornow, Assistant Director for Biological Sciences  
SUBJECT: Report and Diversity Memo of the 2019 Committee of Visitors for the Division of Environmental Biology

This memo reports on the diversity, independence, balance, and resolution of conflicts of the Committee of Visitors (COV) for the Division of Environmental Biology (DEB) held from 12 - 14 June 2019 at NSF to review the Division's work during FY2015 - FY2018. The credibility of the COV mechanism rests, in large measure, on the selection of independent experts who are able to provide balanced and impartial assessments to NSF. Prior to issuing letters of invitation to serve on the DEB COV, the DEB Division Director sought input from DEB Program Officers regarding potential COV candidates and the slate of invitees was approved by BIO/OAD.

The CoV represented a broad segment of the disciplines consistent with the scope of activities for which DEB has oversight responsibilities. The committee was composed of fifteen members, including one representative of the BIO Advisory Committee. Seven members are female, and one is from an underrepresented minority in the fields of environmental biology. Members currently work in fourteen different states (AL, CA, FL, GA, KS, MA, ME, MT, NC, NY/MI, SD, UT, WI), the District of Columbia, and one foreign country (Israel). Twelve members are from academic institutions, including three Primarily Undergraduate Institutions. One member is from government (USDA/NIFA) and two are from private, non-profit scientific organizations. Four of the members had not submitted a proposal to the Division in the previous five years. Nine of the members had not served on a review panel for the Division in the previous five years, but twelve of fifteen had prior NSF review experience. Five members had served on the 2015 DEB COV, including the BIO AC representative and the COV Chair. Two members had prior experience as rotators in BIO at varying points in the last 10 years, but none were at NSF during the years under review.

Committee members were advised about confidentiality and conflicts of interest both prior to arriving at NSF and on the first day of meeting. All COV members were required to complete the NSF Conflict of Interest form and submit a list of potential conflicts prior to receiving access to COV materials. All identified conflicts were managed in the Electronic Jacket COV module and individual COV members were unable to see conflicted proposals and were absent from any discussion of conflicted proposals.