



MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 6, 2011

TO: Dr. Thomas W. Peterson, AD/ENG

FROM: Dr. Sohi Rastegar, Director, ENG/EFRI

SUBJECT: Response to the Report of the Committee of Visitors for the Emerging Frontiers in Research and Innovation Office within the Directorate for Engineering

The EFRI COV report was discussed and accepted at the April 13-14, 2011 meeting of the Engineering Advisory Committee.

I wish to express my thanks to the members of the EFRI Committee of Visitors (COV) for their thoughtful and detailed review of the program and for the timely completion of their report. I also wish to commend the EFRI staff and PDs for their dedicated efforts and spirit of teamwork exhibited in assembling the large volume of material and information for this review.

I am pleased that the COV noted in its summary observations, their enthusiasm for the EFRI program and further stated that – “as a new program, EFRI has been well designed, with the right combination of structure and flexibility to develop compelling interdisciplinary topics and draw in strong, creative proposals. EFRI has been effectively designed to enable PIs to freely explore topical areas of higher risk than conventional NSF programs.”

The COV identified some gaps in the program. For example, it reported that, while not a unique challenge to EFRI, the participation of underrepresented minority PIs and co-PIs is unacceptably low and that EFRI should initiate a series of innovative efforts geared at addressing this issue. The COV felt that while “transformative” is an important descriptor of the program, the term could be more crisply defined within the context. The COV felt there was heavy program emphasis on topic selection and light emphasis on post-award support and recommends PD’s provide annual feedback to PIs. Additionally, the COV cited a gap between upfront program design and outcome/impact assessment of the program at the portfolio and project level and recommends that EFRI develop a framework for assessing outcomes and impacts of the EFRI program so that appropriate data can be collected for ongoing projects.

Please find attached, EFRI’s formal response to the recommendations of the COV, and the membership list of COV members. The COV consisted of 10 members who comprised a subcommittee of the Engineering Advisory Committee. The Chair of the COV and one member are African-American. The committee is composed of 5 women and 5 men from academia, industry and government from different regions across the country. One member of the COV had received past funding from NSF. Individual conflicts were dealt with by blocking the COV member’s access to proposals for which they had a conflict of interest.

Attachments

Response to COV Recommendations

COV Member list