

2008 Committee of Visitors Report for the Ocean and Marine Geosciences Sections of the
Division of Ocean Sciences
Update of Actions as of October 26, 2010

Findings and Recommendations

Transformative Research.

Action: The Division is doing more to ensure that we are working to identify, evaluate fairly and support research that has the potential to be transformative.

Update: This has been discussed more at each panel as program officers instruct panels on the NSF goals and objectives on the topic, including the need for panels to specifically look for projects that have high potential to transform one of more fields of science. These discussions have been augmented in panel orientation, and in individual project discussions along with aligned discussions about interdisciplinary research, and high risk/high reward research. OCE staff have participated in agency-wide discussions about experiences and best practices for identifying and reviewing transformative research, and these discussions make their way back into the OCE dialogue and action at panels.

Broaden Participation.

Action: The Division has continued discussions of approaches to broaden participation by under-represented scientists and women in both the ocean sciences research community (early career faculty, post docs, graduate and undergraduate students), as well is in our own Division operations (science staff, panelists, reviewers).

Update: These discussions have been waged within OCE, with other parts of GEO and NSF more broadly, with community members and with AC/GEO. As a first step for action for increasing participation in the research ranks, we have two draft announcements for competitive post doc and early career facilitation grants, aimed at under-represented minorities and women independently. Discussions about these are ongoing. We also have been successful at increasing under-represented minority participation in OCE panels in the last year.

Project Management.

Action: The program officers and Section Heads are redoubling efforts to better articulate the need to review the broader impacts of projects when they are being evaluated in panel, and to articulate in the review analysis and Program Officer comments when elements of the broader impacts of a project are important in the review decision.

Update: This has also been facilitated by Section Heads taking a more active role in the administrative review of proposal electronic jackets and decisions prior to final OCE recommendations. Similar efforts have been made to improve the information given to the programs and PIs in the panel summaries by panelist, and to improve the flow of information to the PIs on the reasons for the Program decision about a proposal (award or decline) based on the ad hoc reviews, panelist discussions and recommendations, and the Program review. These increased efforts are also facilitated by Section Heads taking a more active role in the administrative review of proposal electronic jackets and decisions prior to final OCE recommendations.