

Charge to the Committee of Visitors

**SBE Office of Multi-Disciplinary Activities (SMA)
SBE Office of the Director
Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences
National Science Foundation**

December 15-16, 2011

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has a long standing practice of reviewing all programs on a three-year cycle. The review is performed by a Committee of Visitors (COV), which serves as a subcommittee of the Advisory Committee for the Directorate for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences (SBE). The COV members form an independent group of external experts. NSF uses COVs to assess the scientific portfolio as well as the overall program review process.

Beginning with Fiscal Year 2010, NSF's Directorate for the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences created the SBE Office of Multidisciplinary Activities. This office houses programs that support research and education that span the entire directorate, programs that have an impact across the entire Foundation, and new and innovative programs that support multidisciplinary science. While there are a number of other activities that are included in SMA, the current Committee of Visitors (empaneled in December, 2011) is convened to focus on three specific programs:

- Science of Science and Innovation Policy (SciSIP)
- Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU)
- SBE Minority Postdoctoral Research Fellowship Program (MPRF)

In considering these three programs, NSF charges the Committee of Visitors to consider the performance of the office in two primary areas:

- Assess the quality and integrity of operations, including technical and managerial matters pertaining to proposal recommendations.
- Comment on how the awards made have the potential to contribute to the attainment of NSF's mission and strategic goals. [See "Empowering the Nation Through Discovery and Innovation - NSF Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years (FY) 2011-2016"
http://nsf.gov/news/strategicplan/nsfstrategicplan_2011_2016.pdf]

SBE would like your advice about several questions related specifically to the SBE Office of Multi-Disciplinary Activities. Please comment on both scientific and management aspects of each of the following office-specific questions:

- **Capacity Building:** Two of the programs included in this review are specifically targeted to expanding research capability in the SBE sciences, one directed towards undergraduate students (REU), and the second post-doctoral fellows. How well do these programs meet their stated missions? What could NSF do better in these areas?

- **Broadening Participation:** Imperative in all consideration of human resources is the need to expand opportunities for underrepresented groups. Please discuss how these programs might act to broaden representation of women, underrepresented populations, and individuals with disabilities in our sciences? How might the data, methodologies and theories of our sciences lead to a deeper understanding of the problem and assist in formulating evidence-based policy?
- **Innovation:** Maintaining U.S. competitiveness through innovation will be critical in the upcoming decade. What might NSF do better to attract and fund research on innovation, including individual-, organizational-, and societal-level factors that contribute to an exceptional ecology of innovation? What should be the balance between studying the causes or drivers of innovation and studying the impacts or outcomes of innovation?

To assist COVs, NSF has developed a basic set of questions and a report template for the entire Foundation. **Please remember that your report must be completed and submitted before final adjournment.**

Thank you again for your service to the NSF.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Myron P. Gutmann". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Myron Gutmann
Assistant Director, National Science Foundation
Directorate for the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences