NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
4201 WILSON BOULEVARD
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22230
Tel. 703-292-8040 ~ Fax. 703-292-9040

OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AND INTEGRATIVE ACTIVITIES (OIIA)

MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 2, 2014

TO: International Science and Engineering (ISE) Advisory Committee

CC: NSF Senior Management (OD, COO, CFO, OIG, NSF Committee Management Officer, NSF COV Coordinator)
Acting Section Head, OIIA/ISE
Chair, COV

FROM: Wanda E. Ward, Office Head, (OIIA)

SUBJECT: Response to the ISE Committee of Visitors (COV) Report

Please find attached the International Science and Engineering (ISE) response to the Committee of Visitors (COV) report from the ISE COV Review (September 16-17, 2014). The review was thorough and insightful, and the findings will inform the National Science Foundation (NSF) in fulfilling our responsibilities to the scientific community and to the nation in the area of international engagement.

I submit the attached as the official response of OIIA/ISE. The required Diversity and Conflict of Interest Report is appended to the end of the ISE Response. I hope that the full ISE Advisory Committee found the COV review useful and will find the ISE response useful as well.

Wanda E. Ward
Office Head

Attachments:
Response of ISE to the 2014 COV Recommendations
2014 ISE COV Report

OIIA/ISE Response to the
September 2014 Report of the Committee of Visitors (COV)

International Science and Engineering (ISE) wishes to thank the members of the 2014 COV panel for their time and effort on the review of the activities of ISE. We are very grateful to the COV Chair for his strong leadership during the COV process, resulting in the timely completion of the final report.

We also appreciate the thorough review and the actionable recommendations. We are pleased that the COV panel recognized ISE's commitment to a thoughtful and fair review process. In the following, we respond to the specific recommendations in the same order as presented in the report. If deemed necessary for clarification, passages from the full report are quoted.

"Recommendation #1: Continue to emphasize strengths and weaknesses under each merit criterion in the panel summary."

ISE will continue this practice, which serves both the review and the PI communities.

"Recommendation #2: Provide greater guidance to PIs and panelists on what constitutes broader impact and how it will be assessed."

The National Science Board has established the Broader Impacts review criterion, and periodically revisits its definitions (most recently in December 2011; see National Science Foundation's Merit Review Criteria: Review and Revisions; NSB/MR-11-22). Definitions have remained broad so as to provide guidance without being prescriptive, thereby encouraging the research community's creativity in addressing this as well as the Intellectual Merit review criterion. ISE will continue to stress the importance of addressing Broader Impacts in proposals and reviews and will emphasize the importance of linking research to societal impacts and addressing how educational/outreach activities and broadening participation, inter alia, benefit society. ISE's guidance will be informed by the recent NSF publication "Perspectives on Broader Impacts" (NSF 15-008).

"Recommendation #3: Stability in leadership of the ISE is an essential next step and a director of ISE should be selected soon who can provide sustained leadership for a reasonable period moving forward."

A vacancy announcement was posted on October 17, 2014, for an Office Head of the Office of International Science and Engineering under the Office of the Director. The vacancy announcement closes on December 15, 2014. The position calls for a full-time SES Career, SES Limited-term Appointment (1-3 years), or an Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) assignment.

"Recommendation #4: An ISE retreat should be held as soon as possible and in particular before the next round of 2015 proposals start coming into the ISE. A retreat would be very helpful and informative for the ISE program to identify and discuss immediate next steps."

A two-day professionally facilitated strategic planning retreat has been organized for ISE. The retreat focuses on developing a strategic decision framework for advancing transformative science and engineering through international engagement. Specifically, the first day (November 24, 2014) focused on taking stock of current programs and directions and identifying shared values. The second day of the retreat will be scheduled shortly thereafter and will focus on completing a strategic direction document. The resulting document will be informed by the 2014 document, *"Advancing Transformative Science and Engineering through International Engagement: A Strategic Framework,"* It will address roughly a 5-year horizon and will be revisited and updated as appropriate.

"Recommendation #5: The ISE-AC needs to meet as soon as possible to address the Strategic Framework and this report, perhaps before the ISE retreat so that the AC recommendations could be discussed."

The ISE-AC met (virtually) on November 6, 2014. The AC discussed and accepted the 2014 COV report; discussed the above cited 2014 strategic framework for international engagement; had an hour long discussion with NSF Director France Córdova that included her vision for ISE, international science, and science diplomacy. The next (in person) AC meeting has been tentatively scheduled for March 26-27, 2015.

"Recommendation #6: ISE staff reductions combined with record increases in the number of ISE proposals have led to a disproportionate increase in the workload of the remaining ISE staff. Additional ISE staff are critically needed to rebalance the workload within the ISE section."

Within the last two months ISE has recruited two new program officers and is continuing with its recruitment process to hire additional program staff; additional new hires are expected in the near future. Also relevant to this recommendation, the retreat addressed in the response to Recommendation #4 will include among its aims the prioritization of activities in the context of present staffing.

"Recommendation #7: Develop and implement a simple way for ISE staff to consistently quantify and document non-proposal activities that contribute to the international goals of NSF."

ISE has implemented a "logging" system to keep track of its non-proposal activities (e.g. OD correspondence, OD briefings, joint committee meeting materials). Additional ideas and approaches will be addressed at the planning retreat.

Diversity and Conflict of Interest Report

OIIA/ISE held its triennial Committee of Visitors (COV) review on September 16-17, 2014. The COV was composed of ten members from the scientific community chosen for their scientific expertise and awareness of developments in their respective fields, as well as a sense of issues and perspectives within the global scientific community. The ten COV members composed a diverse committee with respect to geographic, institutional, gender, ethnicity, age, and scientific representation; the table below describes the main features of the COV with respect to these characteristics. Note that because demographic information is self-reported, data may not be available for all members of the Committee.

The COV was briefed on issues of Conflict of Interest and confidentiality. Each COV member completed an NSF Conflicts of Interest form. Known conflicts of interest, such as those involving the home institutions of COV members, were entered into the Electronic Jacket Committee of Visitors system prior to the start of the meeting, thereby preventing access to relevant materials with which a member had a known conflict. Additional materials requested by the Committee were screened before provision to the COV to avoid any conflicts of interest. None of the COV members was involved in the review of a program in which he or she had a pending proposal. The OIIA COI officer was available at all times during the COV meeting to answer questions and resolve issues regarding conflicts of interest.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ethnicity
Hispanic 2
Not Hispanic 8

Race
White 7
Black or African American 1

Gender
Female 3
Male 7

Institution Type
PhD 10

Public/Private
Public 9
Private 1

Geographic
Far West FW 1
Plains PL 3
Southeast SE 4
Southwest SW 2