



OFFICE OF THE  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR  
FOR MATHEMATICAL AND  
PHYSICAL SCIENCES

**NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION**  
4201 WILSON BOULEVARD  
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22230

March 19, 2012

Dear Colleagues:

The MPS Advisory Committee (MPSAC) meeting will be held on Thursday and Friday, April 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, at the National Science Foundation (NSF) in Arlington, Virginia. I want to take this opportunity to bring you up to date on MPS activities since our meeting last November and propose some items for discussion during our meeting.

*Staffing:* I am very pleased to inform you of three recent senior staff appointments: Dr. Henry (Hank) Warchall has been appointed Deputy Division Director for the Division of Mathematical Sciences (DMS). Hank has been serving as Acting Deputy Division Director and was previously a program officer in DMS. Dr. Dean Evasius has been appointed Head of the Office of Multidisciplinary Activities (OMA)/Senior Science Advisor for the Office of the Assistant Director. Dean was previously also a program officer in DMS. Finally, Dr. Tanja Pietrass, has been appointed Deputy Division Director in the Division of Chemistry (CHE), where she was previously Acting Deputy Division Director and a program officer.

As some of you may know, Dr. Matthew (Matt) Platz, CHE Division Director, has been selected as the Vice President for Academic Affairs at the University of Hawaii – Hilo. Dr. Platz will assume this position on January 1, 2013. We congratulate Matt on this appointment and wish him every success in his new position. Over the next few months, we will begin the process of hiring a new Division Director, and I ask the MPSAC to designate a search committee to assist in this process.

*Budget:* As of March 2012, the FY 2012 appropriation for NSF has been enacted, and the FY 2013 budget request has been submitted to Congress. The FY 2012 budget and the request for FY 2013 will be discussed by each of the Divisions during the afternoon breakout sessions on Thursday.

*Agenda:* There are several agenda items that I would like to highlight.

Subcommittees of the MPSAC have always played an important role in MPS activities, and they have had significant impact both within MPS and throughout NSF. Four subcommittees have been active since our last meeting:

- The Division of Physics (PHY) had a Committee of Visitors (COV) meeting in February 2012. The COV report and the MPS response will be presented on Thursday.
- Several months ago, the DMS Director offered a proposal to change the name of the Division of Mathematical Sciences to the Division of Mathematical and Statistical Sciences. I charged a subcommittee of the MPSAC (DMS 2012) with developing the arguments for and against this proposal, and asked the subcommittee to the mathematical and statistical communities within the U.S. We will hear a report from this subcommittee at this meeting.
- The Division of Astronomical Sciences (AST) Portfolio Review subcommittee has been charged with providing recommendations on the critical capabilities needed over the period from 2015 to 2025 to enable progress on the science program articulated in Chapter 2 of Astro2010<sup>1</sup>. The subcommittee will also offer recommendations for balancing investments in new and existing facilities, grants programs, and other activities that would deliver the needed capabilities within budgetary constraints.
- We will hear a preliminary report from the *NSF Materials 2022* subcommittee that was charged with developing a vision for the facilities and instrumentation needs of the materials community in the coming decade. The subcommittee was asked to address how DMR could best utilize its resources to meet national needs in instrumentation and provide access to unique instrumentation capabilities through user programs at national facilities.

*Breakout Sessions:* You will meet with Divisional staff during the breakout sessions on Thursday afternoon. At these sessions, I have asked each Division to update you on their respective activities, issues and concerns.

*Science for 2014:* We have begun planning for FY 2014 and will devote most of Friday morning to hear your thoughts on science and education topics for MPS. In preparation for our discussions, I have asked MPS senior staff to develop some concept papers on possible MPS initiatives for FY 2014, which you can find in the “For MPSAC Members Only” area of the Advisory Committee web site. Please review these papers in advance of our meeting. Additionally, I am asking that some of you serve as lead “readers” based on your individual expertise and interest, and that you lead discussions on these topics on Friday morning. The assignments are detailed on the spreadsheet that is posted alongside the White Papers. We are following up with calls with the leaders and staff to make sure that you are able to be engaged in helping us think through these important activities.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Astro2010 Decadal Survey recommendations laid out in *New Worlds, New Horizons in Astronomy and Astrophysics* ([http://sites.nationalacademies.org/bpa/BPA\\_049810](http://sites.nationalacademies.org/bpa/BPA_049810))

In addition, both in my introductory presentation and especially Friday morning, I look forward to discussing some ideas on how we can more effectively unite the various strengths of MPS through a more unified approach to activities across our five divisions as a stronger force for science, both within our directorate and across the NSF.

*Meeting with the Director:* We will have a lunch meeting with the Director of NSF on Friday, and we have set aside time to prepare for this meeting.

We have deliberately minimized the amount of background material for this meeting to keep the focus on science activities. Our discussions will help us as we move forward with budget and long range planning for FY 2014 and beyond. As always, your advice is particularly important to us.

Dr. Morris Aizenman, the Senior Science Associate in MPS, serves as a liaison between the MPSAC and the MPS Directorate. If you have questions or suggestions, please contact him at 703-292-8807 or at maizenma@nsf.gov. Ms. Nichol  Johnson has sent you information concerning travel and hotel arrangements. You may reach her at 703-292-8806 or at njohnson@nsf.gov.

I look forward to a productive meeting and to seeing you at our meeting.

Sincerely,

Ed Seidel  
Assistant Director