

National Science Foundation
Directorate for Biological Sciences

Advisory Committee Meeting
April 30, 2020
Virtual Meeting

Summary Minutes

BIO Advisory Committee Members in Attendance:

Dr. Carla Cáceres (Chair)	Dr. Benjamin Garcia	Dr. Gretchen North
Dr. Suzanne Barbour	Dr. Michael Ibba	Dr. Diane Pataki
Dr. Barbara Beltz	Dr. Richard Kuhn	Dr. Maria Pellegrini
Dr. Jeannine Cavender-Bares	Dr. C. Robertson McClung	Dr. Paul Turner
Dr. Thomas Daniel	Dr. Lucinda McDade	

BIO Advisory Committee Members Not in Attendance:

Dr. Susan Gregurick

Thursday, April 30, 2020

Dr. Joanne Tornow, National Science Foundation (NSF) Assistant Director for Biological Sciences (BIO), convened the meeting at 1:00 PM EST by welcoming the Advisory Committee (AC) members, NSF staff, and guests.

Dr. Brent Miller, Science Advisor for the Office of the Assistant Director for Biological Sciences, provided the AC members with an overview reminder of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) rules.

Dr. Carla Cáceres, Advisory Committee Chair, led the introduction of the AC members and NSF staff present at the meeting.

The AC unanimously approved the September 2019 AC meeting minutes without changes.

BIO Directorate Update – *Dr. Joanne Tornow, Assistant Director for Biological Sciences*

Dr. Tornow provided an update on the state of the BIO Directorate since the previous meeting. Topics covered included NSF and BIO senior leadership changes; an update on the FY 2020 budget breakdown, the FY 2021 budget request status and agency priorities, and the process for setting the FY 2022 request; an update on funding rate changes under the shift to no deadlines; updates on programmatic activities; and NSF's response to and the change in operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Tornow also answered questions from the AC Members about the shift to a no deadline structure, future budgets, and the impact of the pandemic on hiring NSF staff. She stated that a discussion of BIO's programs in support of integration of biology and of collections programs is being deferred until the fall AC meeting.

Standard Metrics for BIO Proposal Submissions and Review – *Dr. Barbara Beltz, AC Liaison to Subcommittee on Proposal Submission; Dr. Brent Miller, Science Advisor, Office of the Assistant Director for Biological Sciences and BIO Liaison to Subcommittee on Proposal Submission*

Dr. Barbara Beltz, AC Liaison to the Subcommittee on Proposal Submission (SPS), described the work of the SPS, reminded the AC of the SPS charge and membership, and discussed major accomplishments and outcomes of the activity. Dr. Beltz reported that the analysis of the metrics in FY 2018 and FY 2019 showed no detrimental impacts on any of the metrics developed by the group. Dr. Miller presented trends in the SPS standard metrics, discussed BIO's intent to publicize the information to the research community, and noted the continued monitoring of metrics to inform policy and business changes and evidence-based decision making. Following the update, AC members asked questions about panel composition changes and the levels of co-funding activity among directorates and divisions in the future.

Long-Term Ecological Research (LTER) Charge Approval – *Dr. Stephanie Hampton, Division Director, Division of Environmental Biology*

Dr. Stephanie Hampton, Division Director for the Division of Environmental Biology (DEB), provided an update on the status of the charge for the Fourth Decadal Review of the NSF Long-Term Ecological Research (LTER) Network. Topics included an overview of the LTER program and history of the review process, the cross-foundational funding structure, and importance of the charge. AC members posed questions about engagement opportunities at the individual sites within the LTER network, especially during the pandemic, the importance of data and community colleges, and ways to ensure the quality of research across the network. The AC unanimously approved the motion to establish a subcommittee and the charge to conduct the decadal review.

Response to Division of Environmental Biology (DEB) Committee of Visitors (COV) Report – *Dr. Alan Tessier, Deputy Assistant Director for Biological Sciences*

Dr. Alan Tessier, Deputy Assistant Director for Biological Sciences, noted the AC approved the DEB Committee of Visitors (COV) report at the September 2019 meeting, and provided the AC with the BIO response to the DEB COV report prior to this meeting. He indicated the recommendations from the response will be considered by the next COV to evaluate DEB. AC members discussed aspects of the report and asked questions focused on breaking down silos and seeking additional methods, other than workshops, to receive input from the research community on identifying emerging ideas, especially during the pandemic.

Research Communities' Adaptation to COVID-19 Restrictions – *Dr. Fleming Crim, Chief Operating Officer, Office of the Director; Dr. Joanne Tornow, Assistant Director for Biological Sciences; Dr. Carla Cáceres, Advisory Committee Chair*

Dr. Fleming Crim, Chief Operating Officer for the Office of the Director, updated the AC on NSF leadership changes, the FY 2020 budget, the FY 2021 budget request, and NSF's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Tornow elaborated on the NSF response to COVID-19. Details included focusing on impacts to investigators and institutions, planning for recovery and loss prevention, and preparing a COVID-19 session for the upcoming National Science Board (NSB) Meeting.

Dr. Cáceres moderated the AC discussion on areas the members see as negative impacts caused by the pandemic. Areas of discussion included impacts on the research community and institutions, with emphasis on community colleges, and the early stage of the STEM pipeline such as undergraduate graduating seniors, graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, and early career faculty. The AC members also discussed the types of COVID-19 research NSF supports, remote learning effectiveness, and the engagement of international scholars.

Future Planning: Interests of the AC & BIO – *Dr. Joanne Tornow, Assistant Director for Biological Sciences*

Dr. Tornow requested the AC members consider topics of interest for the next AC meeting. The AC indicated they would be interested in learning more about the impact of COVID-19 on the careers of early stage investigators and long term research projects, an update on COVID-19 research supported by NSF, future COVs, and additional discussion on the FY 2020 SPS standard metrics.

Dr. Tornow adjourned the meeting at 3:00PM EST.