

Directorate for Biological Sciences
Office of the Assistant Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 7, 2015

TO: Steve Meacham, OIA

FROM: James L. Olds, Assistant Director for Biological Sciences

SUBJECT: Report and Diversity Memo of the 2015 Committee of Visitors for the Division of Environmental Biology

This memo reports on the diversity, independence, balance, and resolution of conflicts of the Committee of Visitors (CoV) for the Division of Environmental Biology (DEB) held from the 17 - 19 June, 2015 at NSF to review the Division's work during FY2012 - FY2014.

The credibility of the CoV mechanism rests, in large measure, on the selection of independent experts who are able to provide balanced and impartial assessments to NSF. Prior to issuing letters of invitation to serve on the DEB CoV, the DEB Division Director and Deputy Division Director were consulted regarding potential CoV candidates and the slate of invitees was approved by BIO/OAD. Program Officers in DEB also were instrumental in identifying and selecting membership of the CoV.

The CoV represented a broad segment of the disciplines consistent with the scope of activities for which DEB has oversight responsibilities. The committee was composed of sixteen members, including one representative of the BIO Advisory Committee. Eight members are female, and four are from underrepresented minorities in the fields of environmental biology. Members currently work in fourteen different states (CA, CO, CT, DC, FL, GA, IL, MA, ME, MI, MN, NE, NY, VA) and one foreign country (Canada). Twelve members are from academic institutions, including three Predominantly Undergraduate Institutions. One member is from government (USDA/NIFA) and three are from private, non-profit scientific organizations. Six of the members had not submitted a proposal to the Division in the previous five years. Seven of the members had not served on a review panel for the Division in the previous five years, but fourteen of sixteen had prior NSF review experience. Two members had prior DEB CoV experience, one returning from the 2003 CoV and another from the 2012 CoV. Three members had prior experience as rotators in BIO at varying points in the last 25 years, but none were at NSF during the years under review.

Committee members were advised about confidentiality and conflicts of interest both prior to arriving at NSF and on the first day of meeting. All CoV members were required to complete the NSF Conflict of Interest form and submit a list of potential conflicts prior to receiving access to CoV materials. All identified conflicts were managed in the Electronic Jacket CoV module and individual CoV members were unable to see conflicted proposals and were absent from any discussion of conflicted proposals.