FY 2013 REPORT TEMPLATE FOR
NSF COMMITTEES OF VISITORS (COVs)

The table below should be completed by program staff.

Date of COV: September 9–10, 2013
Program/Cluster/Section: Tribal Colleges and Universities Program (TCUP)
Division: Division of Human Resource Development (HRD)
Directorate: Directorate for Education and Human Resources (EHR)
Number of actions reviewed: 32 **Awards: 15** **Declinations: 17** **Other:**
Total number of actions within Program/Cluster/Division during period under review: 45 **Awards: 25** **Declinations: 20** **Other:**
Manner in which reviewed actions were selected: TCUP has a limited pool of eligible institutions of higher education, and therefore typically receives a relatively small number of proposals in any cycle. Random sampling alone is not sufficient to provide a good picture of program activity. For the period under review, proposals were selected to represent the four different program strands, but the sample was limited to 32 to allow for thorough review within the time available to the committee. However, all 45 proposals were available to the COV members upon request. All 2010 non-PEEC proposals (awards and declinations) were included for review. That was the largest TCUP submission ever, and it seemed pertinent to show why so many awards were made that year (9 proposals awarded, 9 proposals declined), and to include pre-award site-visited proposals. PEEC actions also took place in 2010, but the proposals were managed collaboratively between TCUP and Engineering, including a review by a separate panel. The program selected for COV review one declined collaborative (2 proposals declined), one awarded collaborative (3 proposals awarded), and one awarded non-collaborative (1 proposal awarded). These proposals were selected for the COV's sample to show how collaborative versus non-collaborative proposals were reviewed. The 2012 proposals, which were received in 2011, were separated by strands into ICE-TI (1 proposal awarded, 4 proposals declined) and TSIP (1 proposal awarded, 2 proposals declined). These were selected to show how the smaller strands are reviewed separately from the larger strands. The breakdown of the COV's sample of 32 proposals was as follows: 15 awards (2010: 9 non-PEEC and 4 PEEC; 2012: 2); and 17 declinations (2010: 9 non-PEEC and 2 PEEC; 2012: 6).

COV Membership

	Name	Affiliation
COV Chair or Co-Chairs:	Dr. Evelynn Hammonds Dr. Francisco C. Rodriguez	Harvard University MiraCosta Community College District
COV Members:	Dr. Anselm Davis Mr. Scott Morgan Dr. David Burgess	White House Initiative on TCUs, retired Sisseton Wahpeton College Boston College

INTEGRITY AND EFFICIENCY OF THE PROGRAM'S PROCESSES AND MANAGEMENT

Briefly discuss and provide comments for *each* relevant aspect of the program's review process and management. Comments should be based on a review of proposal actions (awards, declinations, and withdrawals) that were *completed within the past three fiscal years*. Provide comments for *each* program being reviewed and for those questions that are relevant to the program(s) under review. Quantitative information may be required for some questions. Constructive comments noting areas in need of improvement are encouraged.

I. Questions about the quality and effectiveness of the program's use of merit review process. Please answer the following questions about the effectiveness of the merit review process and provide comments or concerns in the space below the question.

QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF MERIT REVIEW PROCESS	YES, NO, DATA NOT AVAILABLE, or NOT APPLICABLE
1. Are the review methods (for example, panel, ad hoc, site visits) appropriate? Comments: The merit review process used effective methods that were of high quality to approve or deny awards. Instructions to panelists should be updated so that panelists have a clear idea of expectations for a more substantive review, which would benefit the applicants. Pre-approval site visits are a prudent step for reviewing borderline proposals or those where important questions are raised during the review. **Data Source: EIS/Type of Review Module**	YES

2. Are both merit review criteria addressed
 	
   a) In individual reviews?
 	
   b) In panel summaries?
 	
   c) In Program Officer review analyses?
 	
Comments:
 	
In almost all cases both review criteria were addressed in the individual reviews. However, it appeared that much more focus was placed on the intellectual merit.
	YES

Individual reviews sometimes restate information from the proposal rather than offer evaluative comments. Panel experience seemed to dictate the degree with which each criterion was addressed. In the Broader Impacts criteria of individual reviews, reviewers were much more likely to restate what was in the application rather than offer evaluative and specific comments. The Program Officer (PO) analyses were consistently excellent and provided helpful information to the applicant. **Data Source: Jackets**	
3. Do the individual reviewers giving written reviews provide substantive comments to explain their assessment of the proposals? Comments: Overall, reviewer comments provided adequate information to justify their assessment of the proposals. In some cases, however, there seemed to be a mismatch between the reviewer comments and scores. This may be the result of panel discussion leading to a reviewer revising a rating, but if this is the case it should be made clear in the comments. Reviewers should be instructed to make comments that are consistent with their ratings. Some reviewers consistently offered single-line reviews or otherwise superficial commentary. More thorough comments would be more useful for applicants. Some reviewers were unwilling to suggest declining a proposal even when justified. **Data Source: Jackets**	YES
4. Do the panel summaries provide the rationale for the panel consensus (or reasons consensus was not reached)? Comments: Panel summaries were generally excellent and provided the strengths and weaknesses of the proposals. These led to well-justified site visits where very frank questions were addressed in a direct fashion. These site visit reports were excellent. **Data Source: Jackets**	YES
5. Does the documentation in the jacket provide the rationale for the award/decline decision? [Note: Documentation in the jacket usually includes a context statement, individual reviews, panel summary (if applicable), site visit reports (if applicable), program officer review analysis, and staff diary notes.]	YES

Comments: The documentation in the jacket did provide all of the information necessary to support award/decline decisions. All decisions were consistent with the panel consensus and review analysis. PO comments were especially articulate. **Data Source: Jackets**	
6. Does the documentation to the PI provide the rationale for the award/decline decision? [Note: Documentation to PI usually includes context statement, individual reviews, panel summary (if applicable), site visit reports (if applicable), and, if not otherwise provided in the panel summary, an explanation from the program officer (written in the PO Comments field or emailed with a copy in the jacket, or telephoned with a diary note in the jacket) of the basis for a declination.] Comments: Overall, documentation to the PI provided the rationale for the award/decline decision. Panel summaries and PO statements were especially helpful. In some cases individual reviews did not provide sufficient detail to be useful. **Data Source: Jackets**	YES
7. Additional comments on the quality and effectiveness of the program's use of merit review process: In several reviews, specific concerns were raised about one element of a proposal that should not be funded. However, the entire budget was funded as requested. Some declined proposals contained one or more elements that were strong, but the overall score was poor. Perhaps NSF should explore the possibility of allowing a declined proposal with one or more elements that were strong to revise the proposal for possible funding, which will require exploring innovative ways to fund such a proposal. Additionally, time from proposal submission to award decision remains too long. This might be alleviated by additional program staff.	

II. Questions concerning the selection of reviewers. Please answer the following questions about the selection of reviewers and provide comments or concerns in the space below the question**.**

SELECTION OF REVIEWERS	YES , NO, DATA NOT AVAILABLE, or NOT APPLICABLE
1. Did the program make use of reviewers having appropriate expertise and/or qualifications? Comments: The panelists represented a very good mix, with different backgrounds, institutional affiliation, and STEM disciplines. An appropriate number of reviewers are affiliated or have prior experience with Tribal Colleges, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian-serving institutions. **Data Source: Jackets**	YES
2. Did the program recognize and resolve conflicts of interest when appropriate? Comments: No direct COIs were noted. **Data Source: Jackets**	YES
3. Additional comments on reviewer selection: Perhaps a larger pool of reviewers could be recruited. Some reviewers consistently underperformed in terms of their written critiques. These reviews are not of any benefit to the applicant or the NSF. The use of reviewers who provide substantive evaluations is encouraged.	

III. Questions concerning the management of the program under review. Please comment on the following:

MANAGEMENT OF THE PROGRAM UNDER REVIEW

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1. Management of the program.

Comments:

The management of the program is very professional and has sustained a consistent character throughout the life of the program. The program management's ongoing willingness to cooperate with other funding agencies and the communities it serves has created stable and trusted relationships and opportunities to expand. The program's ongoing effort to leverage other sources of funding to benefit the institutions it serves is to be applauded.

The program would benefit from increased personnel in the form of a full-time, dedicated rotator.

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2. Responsiveness of the program to emerging research and education opportunities.

Comments:

TCUP supports very high quality projects that are relevant to the community. However, there is room for increased involvement. TCUP should consider additional partnerships in the same vein as the partnership with the Engineering Directorate with other directorates such as Biological Sciences; Mathematical & Physical Sciences; Computer & Information Science; Geosciences; and Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences).

We also encourage the program to explore opportunities for partnership programs with organizations such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) where possible.

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3. Program planning and prioritization process (internal and external) that guided the development of the portfolio.

Comments:

The gap in awards granted in 2011 is of concern to this committee, although the COV recognizes the unusual circumstances that led to the situation. The program should take a closer look at the possible problems that may arise from the cyclical nature of proposals – the large number of expected proposals in 2015 needs to be planned for and balanced against lighter years.

Also, the number of tribal colleges who are eligible for TCUP but have not been successful in receiving funding should be addressed by the program. Emphasizing past performance in proposals perhaps leads to a missed opportunity in the capacity building aspect of TCUP. Two- to three-year smaller-capacity building awards to unfunded or underfunded institutions may be a valid response. This may also help ease the cycle mentioned above.

The program should consider opening more opportunities for smaller and/or more short-term funding, such as Targeted STEM Infusion Projects (TSIP).

4. Responsiveness of program to previous COV comments and recommendations.

Comments:

The shift from post-award site visits to pre-award site visits as part of the review process is a responsive to prior recommendations. Likewise, adding new programmatic strands is a sound response to previous COV comments. Overall the program has been very successful at responding to recommendations.

The program director is to be applauded for continued attention to COV comments.

However, we continue to encourage that a full-time rotator be assigned to this program in order to reduce the load on program staff. Additional full-time staff might help reduce the proposal dwell time.

IV. Questions about Portfolio. Please answer the following about the portfolio of awards made by the program under review.

RESULTING PORTFOLIO OF AWARDS	APPROPRIATE, NOT APPROPRIATE, OR DATA NOT AVAILABLE
1. Does the program portfolio have an appropriate balance of awards across disciplines and sub-disciplines of the activity? Comments: The program should continue to take advantage of opportunities to promote a wide range of STEM disciplines and the possible connections between them. The COV recognizes TCUP has made great improvements in this area and we recommend that they continue to improve. **Data Source: EIS/Committee of Visitors Module. From the Report View drop-down, select the Funding Rate module to see counts of proposals and awards for programs. The Proposal Count by Type Report View will also provide a summary of proposals by program.**	APPROPRIATE
2. Are awards appropriate in size and duration for the scope of the projects? Comments: The size and duration of awards were appropriate to meet the intent of	APPROPRIATE

awarded proposal. While the awards have met the needs of the projects that have been proposed in the past, it may be beneficial for TCUP to explore the possibility of soliciting TCU proposals with lesser scope, whether smaller size and/or shorter duration, and to aim for funding levels more commensurate with smaller projects. This may be a way for TCUs, which have not received a TCUP grant, to submit a successful proposal. The Targeted STEM Infusion Projects (TSIP) is a good concept and serves as an example for modifying the pathway for achieving the above objective. **Data Source: EIS/Committee of Visitors Module. From the Report View drop-down, select Average Award Size and Duration.**	
3. Does the program portfolio include awards for projects that are innovative or potentially transformative? Comments: The projects are innovative and transformative for their institutions and have broader implications for the communities these institutions support. The stabilizing effect of TCUP awards allows for the infusion of cultural approaches in the learning environment. The recognition of STEM students and faculty via TCUP awards helps bolster the institutions well beyond the specific program which received the award. In this way, TCUP awards have allowed for institutional transformation. **Data Source: Jackets**	APPROPRIATE
4. Does the program portfolio include inter- and multi-disciplinary projects? Comments: Several of the proposals which received awards featured interdisciplinary approaches. **Data Source: If co-funding is a desired proxy for measuring inter- and multi-disciplinary projects, the Co-Funding from Contributing Orgs and Co-Funding Contributed to Recipient Orgs reports can be obtained using the EIS/Committee of Visitors Module. They are available as selections on the Report View drop-down.**	APPROPRIATE
5. Does the program portfolio have an appropriate geographical distribution of Principal Investigators? Comments: The distribution of Principal Investigators (PIs) is well matched to the	APPROPRIATE

geographical distribution of TCUs. **Data Source: EIS/Committee of Visitors Module. Select Proposals by State from the Report View drop-down.**	
6. Does the program portfolio have an appropriate balance of awards to different types of institutions? Comments: Both two-year and four-year institutions are well represented by TCUP awards, and the portfolio reflects a strong balance of TCUs, ANSIs, and NHSIs. **Data Source: EIS/Committee of Visitors Module. Select Proposals by Institution Type from the Report View drop-down. Also, the Obligations by Institution Type will provide information on the funding to institutions by type.**	APPROPRIATE
7. Does the program portfolio have an appropriate balance of awards to new investigators? NOTE: A new investigator is an investigator who has not been a PI on a previously funded NSF grant. Comments: The requirement that a PI be a senior academic officer is a determining factor for many programs. TCUP may need to consider allowing senior faculty, with institutional approval, to serve as PIs. **Data Source: EIS/Committee of Visitors Module. Select Funding Rate from the Report View drop-down. After this report is run, use the Category Filter button to select New PI for the PI Status filter or New Involvement (PIs & coPIs) = Yes.**	APPROPRIATE
8. Does the program portfolio include projects that integrate research and education? Comments: The inclusion of research and education projects in the awards given is one of the program's greatest strengths. **Data Source: Jackets**	APPROPRIATE

9. Does the program portfolio have appropriate participation of underrepresented groups[1]? Comments: TCUP primarily serves underrepresented groups. **Data Source: EIS/Committee of Visitors Module. Select Funding Rate from the Report View drop-down. After this report is run, use the Category Filter button to select Women Involvement = Yes or Minority Involvement = Yes to apply the appropriate filters.**	APPROPRIATE
10. Is the program relevant to national priorities, agency mission, relevant fields and other constituent needs? Include citations of relevant external reports. Comments: TCUP increases the knowledge and skills within a specific population of underrepresented and underserved students, educators, researchers, and scientists and supports their ability to contribute to the NSF and national goals of greater representation of minorities and broader, culturally relevant STEM teaching. The impact of TCUP awards goes beyond the institutions that receive the funds. The positive influence of an award stretches out into the communities these institutions serve, which reflects the original intent behind the creation of TCUP. NSF 02-072 *Native America at the New Millennium* **Data Source: Jackets**	APPROPRIATE
11. Additional comments on the quality of the projects or the balance of the portfolio: It would be beneficial to be able to track STEM students who transfer from 2-year TCUs to other institutions and receive baccalaureate degrees. A study could investigate this information. We also recommend that performance objectives be established and monitored to document the success of the program and projects.	

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[1] NSF does not have the legal authority to require principal investigators or reviewers to provide demographic data. Since provision of such data is voluntary, the demographic data available are incomplete. This may make it difficult to answer this question for small programs. However, experience suggests that even with the limited data available, COVs are able to provide a meaningful response to this question for most programs.

OTHER TOPICS

1. Please comment on any program areas in need of improvement or gaps (if any) within program areas.

There is an opportunity for TCUP to expand its interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary reach, in part through cooperation with other agencies. TCUP needs to have greater outreach to partner with other American Indian-serving associations.

2. Please provide comments as appropriate on the program's performance in meeting program-specific goals and objectives that are not covered by the above questions.

The COV has no additional comments.

3. Please identify agency-wide issues that should be addressed by NSF to help improve the program's performance.

As stated above, joint programs with other funding agencies and other directorates within NSF would benefit the institutions TCUP serves. The Pre-engineering Education Collaboratives (PEEC) initiative would be an excellent model for future efforts.

4. Please provide comments on any other issues the COV feels are relevant.

The COV would like to see outcome goals for TCUP funded programs. NSF is encouraged to establish metrics for measuring the success of the program. Graduation rates, community impact, and participation increases may be appropriate areas to establish goals.

5. NSF would appreciate your comments on how to improve the COV review process, format and report template.

This panel believes the COV process is very well constructed and sees no obvious areas requiring improvement.

SIGNATURE BLOCK:

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For the 2013 TCUP COV
Dr. Anselm Davis
Panel Chair