

## **Polar Programs Subcommittee of GEO Advisory Committee**

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### **August 15, 2014, 13:00-14:30 EDT Conference Call**

Polar Programs Subcommittee (PLR SC) participants: Cecilia Bitz, Christina Cheng, Linda Green, John Isbell, and Jeanne Kosch

Full Geosciences Advisory Committee (AC GEO) participants: Jordan Powers, Linda Hayden, Mary-Elana Carr, and Dennis McGillicuddy

National Science Foundation Division of Polar Programs (NSF PLR) participants: Kelly Falkner, Scott Borg, Polly Penhale, Arthur Brown, Anna Kerttula, George Blaisdell, Nature McGinn, Lisa Clough, Mark Kurz, Winifred Reuning, Bill Wiseman, Neil Swanberg, Pat Smith, Hedy Edmonds, Renee Crain, Ming-Yi Sun, and Andrew Backe

### **Discussion Notes**

Cecilia Bitz, chair of the PLR SC developed the agenda in coordination with Sue LaFratta of NSF PLR. Kelly Falkner, Director of NSF PLR, and Cecilia Bitz led the discussion during the teleconference. The main subjects discussed were as follows:

#### *Proposal to the GEO AC for Augmenting the Polar Subcommittee's Scientific Expertise*

- Cecilia Bitz circulated a draft of the proposal to participants prior to the teleconference
- The proposal addressed concerns about whether scientific expertise of members on the PLR SC adequately represents fields and communities covered in Polar Programs
- Specific areas of expertise reviewed included areas missing from the AC GEO and PLR SC (e.g., astronomy and astrophysics using polar platforms, organism biology, and polar infrastructure and logistics) and areas missing from just the PLR SC (e.g., polar atmospheric chemistry; polar marine chemistry; and data & polar cyber-infrastructure computing)
- Memberships of persons augmenting the PLR SC would be limited exclusively to the subcommittee when the full AC GEO cannot include members from an area of research expertise that is important to developing information needed for robust NSF PLR advice
- Members augmenting the PLR SC would be included on virtual PLR SC meetings that supplement in-person AC GEO meetings; they would be invited to call-in during subcommittee breakout sessions at in-person AC GEO meetings
- Several additional points were made:
  - Having members solely on the PLR SC is consistent with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA); SC's are not strictly subject to FACA as long as they report to the Chair of the AC and not a Federal officer
  - The number of areas of scientific expertise on the PLR SC does not have to correspond to the actual number of people on the PLR SC, since individuals can have more than one area of expertise and since expertise can be added to (or removed from) the PLR SC on an "as needed" basis

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- Once a year, perhaps during the AC GEO meeting in the spring, the PLR SC can consider developing a slate of nominations for adjustments to expertise to be considered by the full committee
- Arctic Social Sciences and Arctic Native Communities must also remain represented areas on the PLR SC

### NSF PLR Updates on Personnel and Budget

- NSF PLR has had numerous changes in personnel since reporting at the April AC GEO meeting. Some major changes to report:
  - The Arctic Sciences Section Head (Simon Stephenson) is serving on a detail at the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP); PLR will likely fill his position with an IPA
  - The Antarctic Sciences Section Head (Scott Borg) is simultaneously serving as Acting GEO AGS Division Director
  - Among other positions, NSF PLR is working to fill the Polar, Environment, Safety, and Health (PESH) Section Head
- Two major announcements regarding the budget include:
  - The NSF PLR Antarctic Infrastructure and Logistics (AIL) Section received a plus-up of \$5 million for BRP related improvements for FY14
  - The NSF PLR Antarctic Infrastructure Modernization for Science (AIMS) Project has been approved by the Director to progress to the Conceptual Design Stage; the project outlines modernizations for both McMurdo Station and Palmer Station; the NSF Director made this news public at the August NSB meeting

### Dear Colleague Letter for Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) Opportunities

- NSF PLR has IPA opportunities that are being expressed in a “Dear Colleague” Letter” (DCL)
- PLR SC members are encouraged to inform NSF PLR of potential candidates and to encourage people to respond to the DCL whether interested now or in the future

### Development of a Plan for Measuring the Success and Impacts of the OPP/GEO Merger

- The Office of Polar Programs (OPP) was realigned into GEO as PLR in early 2013 by the NSF Director at that time in order “to improve organizational efficiency and to foster a more streamlined and effective integrations of offices supporting infrastructures and directorates supporting research”
- NSF will be generating a report after the realignment has been in place for 3 years. The actual metrics to be used are not defined, so the PLR SC is proactively discussing metrics
- Prior to the PLR SC teleconference, Cecilia Bitz drafted and distributed a draft of a plan for measuring the impacts of the realignment
- Particular values that the PLR SC wants to ensure are being maintained or expanded under the new structure: fundamental discoveries; diversity of scientists who receive funding; diversity of degree programs engaged in research and education polar science content; diversity of participants in polar field work, breadth and interdisciplinary research and researchers; visibility of our endeavors

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within GEO; public awareness of the polar regions; engagement with Arctic residents; sustainability and environmental stewardship in all our endeavors; responsible, safe and cost-effective access to the polar regions; international collaboration; visibility of NSF as an international leader in polar research; a positive work environment at NSF PLR and GEO; position of strength in negotiations for resource and contracts; and communications between PIs and POs

- Data that might provide hard metrics for measuring realignment impact include: funding opportunities that promote the values above; statistics on submitted and funded proposals; surveys of the general public, Arctic residents, PIs, and POs; analysis of project reports; workshops that promote the values above; assessment of organizational efficiency by NSF organizational psychologists; representation of PLR disciplines in the AC GEO strategic plan; awards for major instrumentations; travel of PLR POs to conferences; and analysis of budgets for PLR divisions
- There was concern that 3-years may be too short for meaningful proposal based statistics, so qualitative measures will be important
- This subject will be revisited prior to and during the AC GEO meeting scheduled for October 29-30, 2014

### **Action Items**

1. Regarding Cecilia Bitz' proposal for augmenting the PLR SC's scientific expertise, PLR SC members should email comments to Cecilia. In turn, Cecilia will circulate a revised copy of the proposal.
2. NSF PLR will provide PLR SC members with additional information about FACA constraints, policies and practices (Falkner).
3. NSF PLR will check to see when members will rotate off of the AC GEO and let the PLR SC know (Backe).
4. NSF PLR will send out the "NSF PLR Updates on Personnel and Budget" to all the teleconference participants (Backe: completed August 15, 2014).
5. NSF PLR will keep the PLR SC apprised of any new developments regarding funding for the AIMS project (Falkner).
6. Regarding the development of metrics for measuring the success of the OPP realignment to GEO, PLR SC members should email to Cecilia Bitz any ideas on what metrics or factors should be included in NSF PLR data tracking efforts and (possibly) the NSF 3-year report that will review the realignment. Program officers can also make suggestions. Cecilia will assemble the ideas and circulate a list to the SC.
7. NSF PLR will continue its ongoing historical analyses of international collaboration and make an assessment of the degree to which available data and research tools will

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permit further analysis at the division level. PLR will pursue a comparison of trends and activities of international counterparts to PLR. (Backe)

8. NSF PLR will provide the dates for the AGU fall meeting PLR Town Hall to the PLR SC as soon as it is assigned (Borg).