



**Department of Energy**  
Office of Science  
Washington, DC 20585

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**Office of the Director**

Dr. Gary Stacey  
Associate Director, National Soybean Biotechnology Center  
Department of Microbiology and Molecular Immunology  
271E Christopher S. Bond Life Sciences Center  
University of Missouri  
Columbia, MO 65211

Dear Dr. Stacey:

By this letter I am charging the Biological and Environmental Research Advisory Committee (BERAC) to assemble a Committee of Visitors (COV) to assess the processes used by the Climate and Environmental Sciences Division (CESD) within BER to manage CESD research programs and two user facilities, the Environmental Molecular Science Laboratory (EMSL) and the Atmospheric Radiation Measurement Climate Research Facility (ACRF).

The COV should provide an assessment of the processes used to solicit, review, recommend and monitor proposals for research submitted to CESD programs for FY2007 – FY2009. This includes funding at national laboratories and universities and other activities handled by the program during this time period. It should also assess the quality of the resulting scientific portfolio, including its breadth and depth and its national and international standing. Additionally, the COV should also assess the division's management and oversight of the EMSL and ACRF user facilities for the same time period. Specifically, I would like the panel to consider and provide an evaluation of the following:

1. For both the DOE national laboratory projects and university grants, assess the efficacy and quality of the processes used by CESD programs during the past three years to:
  - a) solicit, review, recommend and document application and proposal actions, and
  - b) monitor active awards, projects and programs.
2. Within the boundaries defined by DOE mission and available funding, comment on how the award process has affected:
  - a) the breadth and depth of the portfolio elements and,
  - b) the national and international standing of the portfolio elements.
3. For the EMSL and ACRF user facilities, assess the management and oversight of these facilities, including facility operations tracking and review, user proposal solicitation, review and recommendation procedures.

For CESD research programs, topics to be investigated can include but are not limited to; the selection of an adequate number of qualified reviewers who are free from bias and/or conflicts of interest; use of SC merit review criteria; adequacy of documentation; characteristics of the award portfolio; usefulness of progress reports on previously funded research; quality of the overall technical management of the program; relationships between award decisions, program goals and



the DOE mission; significant impacts and advances that have developed since the previous COV review and are demonstrably linked to DOE investments; and the response of the program to recommendations of the previous COV review.

COV members will be given access to all program documentation completed during the period under review including applications, proposals, review documents and other requests. COV members may also request, at their discretion, a representative sample of the program portfolio be provided. In response, CESD may suggest a sample of actions, including new, renewal and supplemental applications and proposals, awards and declinations. In addition, COV members may also choose to review files through a random selection process.

A primary requirement is the COV should have significant expertise across all covered areas within CESD programs and that this expertise should not rely upon one person alone. A second requirement is that a significant fraction of the committee receives no direct research support from DOE. A guideline is that approximately 25 percent of the members receive no direct support from DOE. Any person with an action pending (e.g., application or proposals under review, progress report pending approval) in a CESD program under review will not participate as a COV member for that program. Some, but not all members of a COV, may be selected from a previous COV. A least one COV member will also be a member of BERAC. The committee should be balanced and drawn from a broad field of qualified reviewers from academia, DOE national laboratories, other federal agencies, private sector entities, and other appropriate institutions. The BERAC chair should also consider a number of other balance including, institution, geographic region, diversity, etc. In the end, the COV should constitute an exceptional group of internationally recognized researchers with broad research expertise in the program areas within the CESD as well as deep familiarity with DOE programs. Additional guidance on COV reviews within the Office of Science can be found at [http://www.science.doe.gov/SC-2/Committe\\_of\\_Visitor.htm](http://www.science.doe.gov/SC-2/Committe_of_Visitor.htm) and attachments therein.

The COV should take place in the second quarter of FY2010 (early calendar year 2010) at the BER/DOE location in Germantown, Maryland. A discussion of the COV report by BERAC should be held no later than the fall 2010 BERAC meeting. Following acceptance of the full BERAC committee, the COV report with findings and recommendations is to be presented to me, as the Director, Office of Science.

If you have any questions regarding this charge, please contact J. Michael Kuperberg 301-903-3281 or by email [Michael.Kuperberg@science.doe.gov](mailto:Michael.Kuperberg@science.doe.gov).

Sincerely,



W.F. Brinkman

cc. David Thomassen  
Anna Palmisano