BES Response to the Report of the BESAC Committee of Visitors (COV) Review of the BES Materials Sciences and Engineering Division

Dates of COV: May 22-24, 2012
Date of Response: August 27, 2012
Program Points of Contact: Harriet Kung (BES) and Linda Horton (MSE)

COV Recommendation	BES Response
Budget Given the untapped potential for additional, BES mission-relevant research, increased research funding to support rising costs and new ideas is strongly recommended. Increased travel funding for program managers is an imperative, in order for them to maintain contact with leading science and to promote our international competitiveness. Support for small/midscale instrumentation is a critical need. Maintain a good functional balance between the scales of scientific funding and funding of facilities; the advent of major facilities necessitates enhanced science funding in newly emerging areas.	BES appreciates the COV's support for increased research and travel budgets. We agree that increased support for program manager travel to interact with the community is important. We will continue to work with Office of Science to seek increases in travel funding to enhance contact of program managers with the community. Critically needed small instrumentation is currently funded as part of the grant application process associated with research needs. Equipment funds are also provided for national laboratory research projects. Funding for midscale instrumentation is a high priority and will continue to be balanced with funding for research activities. BES will continue to maintain a balance between research and funding for operation of facilities. We agree that newly emerging areas of science enabled by advancing capabilities are a priority.
Portfolio Analysis and Management System Continue to advance the implementation of PAMS aggressively. Compile and maintain an up-to-date database on gender and racial demographics of PIs and of postdocs and graduate students supported by the Division.	The Office of Science is deploying PAMS iteratively, with new functionality being added as modules are developed. Modules currently in testing and/or development include those for decision documentation and proposal review and will be implemented early in the calendar year of 2013. There is a plan for PAMS to eventually collect (optional and voluntary) demographic data for Principal Investigators. The new, government-wide Research Performance Program Report (RPPR), also to be implemented in PAMS, has an option to collect demographics on others, such as students, associated with each research grant.
Time to Decision for applications Though time-to-decision statistics are improving, give further attention to this metric, particularly in contacting and documenting contact with applicants whose proposals are	When PAMs is fully implemented, administrative steps will be eliminated that will streamline the award and declination process and simplify the tracking of time-to-decision statistics. Until that functionality is in place, MSE will continue ongoing efforts to reduce the average time-to-decision to significantly less than the prior 3 year average of 230 days.

COV Recommendation	BES Response
being declined for funding.	
Proposal Process and White Papers Given the increased use of white papers, encouraged in the last COV report, track and record them in a more thorough manner, both to aid the COV review process and to document a higher level of proposal pressure than shows up statistically. Consider making more use of rebuttals in the proposal review process both to shape close decisions in either direction and to help calibrate reviewers.	We agree that the statistical information on white papers (and Letters of Intent) would be valuable. We are working to include this functionality in PAMS. MSE program managers use rebuttals in the proposal review process as needed for both positive and negative funding decisions. Attention will be maintained to assure that there is documentation and a balance among the use of rebuttals for both types of close decisions.