

**(NP) Response to the Report of the (NSAC) Committee of Visitors Review of
(Office of Nuclear Physics Program)**

Date of COV: January 12-14, 2010
 Date of COV Report: February 26, 2010
 Date of Response: December 17, 2010
 Program Point of Contact: Timothy Hallman

Recommendation/Major Finding	COV General Recommendation/Finding	NP Program Response
Recommendation #1	Consistent with the recommendation of the 2007 COV, it is imperative that the NP immediately establish a database that can be used to track relevant proposal and grant information.	The Office of Nuclear Physics (NP) and the Office of Science (SC) agree with the recommendation to deploy software infrastructure for electronic management and tracking of proposals, grant actions, review reports, etc. The software being developed for this purpose within SC is called the Portfolio Analysis and Management System (PAMS), and funds to develop it were committed by the SC programs in FY10. The Office of Business Policy and Operations within SC has lead responsibility for managing the development and deployment of PAMS. A priority is the creation of a single, uniform, infrastructure for managing grants and proposals across all programs in SC. When PAMS is deployed, NP will move rapidly to utilize its capability to address this COV recommendation.
Recommendation #2	The COV recommends that a discussion of workforce development and diversity be required in all proposals. The COV further recommends that the ONP modify the proposal review/scoring method to elevate the importance of workforce development with emphasis on attracting and training women and members of under-represented groups.	NP strongly believes in the benefits and necessity of workforce development and diversity. The Office will continue to conduct peer review processes that are consistent with federal requirements.

Recommendation #3	The COV strongly recommends that the NP develop a written policy to finalize the reports of laboratory research group reviews within four months after the panel review.	NP has implemented a policy, posted on its web site, stating that reports from all laboratory reviews will be returned within four months, barring extraordinary circumstances beyond its control. Compliance is being tracked. In 2010, nineteen reviews were carried out. Seventeen were completed with reports returned on average 14.4 weeks after the panel review. The two remaining reviews concern the medium energy program; one report is in preparation and is expected to be completed on time; one is delayed due to a critical shortage of workforce beyond NP control.
Recommendation #4	The COV recommends that the NP prepare a written response to the COV recommendations within three months of receiving them from NSAC. This response should contain a plan of action to address the recommendations in this report. A report card that details progress on the COV recommendation should be sent to NSAC at the time of charging the next COV committee.	NP concurs and endorses the goal of responding to COV recommendations within three months. The Office will also provide the status on progress toward addressing COV recommendations prior to charging the next COV.
Recommendation #5	The COV recommends that NP work toward improved feedback to PIs. Feedback to PIs on reviews of proposals in general, including the OJI/Early Career Awards and Theory Topical Reviews, should provide sufficient detail to enable the PI to improve future proposals. Additionally, the review documentation should be uniform and include panel rankings when panels have been used.	NP will establish a consistent feedback process throughout the Office. Additionally, NP will adopt the practice of returning all reviews on all proposals as a matter of course.

<p>Recommendation #6</p>	<p>The COV recommends that NP develop a metric that effectively measures the performance of SBIR projects in contributing to the NP mission and goals. Equally important, the COV recommends that NP proactively work to make the Nuclear Physics Community aware of new technological developments which result from the SBIR/STTR program.</p>	<p>NP recognizes the importance of the SBIR/STTR program to the NP mission. Progress of SBIR projects will be monitored relative to planned goals. Site visits of SBIR companies will strengthen communication. In response to the recommendation concerning dissemination of information on developments in SBIR, NP organized an information exchange meeting September 13-14, 2010, where SBIR Phase II companies were provided an opportunity to report to the nuclear science community on their capabilities and progress and to hear from the community new technical areas of interest. These meetings will be held on a regular basis.</p>
<p>Recommendation #7</p>	<p>The COV recommends that NP identify ways for program managers to have face-to-face contact with university research groups at least once during a grant cycle. Such meetings should be documented to ensure that they are taking place and to provide useful feedback to the NP and the PI. This could be accomplished with site visits, reverse site visits, or at conferences.</p>	<p>NP recognizes the importance of face-to-face contact between university research groups and program managers to help ensure effective communication and feedback to NP and PI's. To address this recommendation in the perspective of the heavy burden that would be posed by the large number of site visits required for the number of grants managed by the Office (~ 200), NP plans to explore the practice of holding Principal Investigator Meetings. Under this approach, an annual or biennial meeting of Principal Investigators in a given subfield is organized, in which PI's, if they choose, can attend and make short informal presentations concerning ongoing work and progress. Program Managers and other NP staff attend and are available for face-to-face discussions. Attendance is at the discretion of the PI's.</p>
<p>Recommendation #8</p>	<p>The COV recommends that the NP consider a way to compare university grants across each program. It is important that a process be developed to establish, normalize, and monitor research grant support and performance across each program element.</p>	<p>NP agrees that consistent management approaches across university grants supported by the program are essential. The Associate Director (AD) and Division Directors will develop mechanisms to enhance communication and consistency in management approaches throughout the program. The capabilities of the PAMS software will assist in assessing uniformity once implemented.</p>

Recommendation #9	The COV recommends strengthening and formalizing the regular review of facility operations at the four national user facilities operated by the Office of Nuclear Physics to better address maintenance, budgetary efficiency and long term planning issues in facility operations.	NP concurs with this recommendation. In FY 2010, NP conducted operations reviews of all four of its facilities, which focused on maintenance, budgets, operations and long-term maintenance. These topics continue to be addressed at facility Science and Technology Reviews. In addition, NP continues to collect detailed information on facility budgets and long-term plans at its annual budget meetings. NP recently adopted the strategy of holding Science and Technology reviews on a biennial basis at the four national user facilities within the NP program to assess scientific and technical progress and operational efficiency. Facilities operations reviews have been carried out in the past on an as-needed basis. A facility operations review will be held at national user facilities on a regular basis, replacing the Science and Technology review in the year in which it occurs. The expected frequency of facility operations reviews is once every 4-5 years.
Recommendation #10	The COV recommends that the Associate Director be involved in developing and approving the final strategy for the handoff of a project to scientific operations. Effective coordination between the Physics Research Division and the Facilities and Project Management Division on the CD-4 requirements for projects is essential to optimize the overall benefit of the project with consideration of the budgets for both divisions.	As part of the procedure followed for projects in NP, the AD participates in discussions between the Facilities and Project Management Division and the Physics Research Division, as well as with the Office of Project Assessment, on the development of CD-4 requirements for projects. The AD also approves or concurs on Project Execution Plans for projects, which contain CD-4 requirements, prior to CD-2/3 approval. Effective coordination between the divisions on all matters, including the needed scientific research workforce needed to utilize and maintain the detector, is a core value of NP. The AD has and will continue to be personally involved in those efforts. Dedicated discussions between the Facilities and Projects Division and the Research Division of the interface and transition from construction to research are being strengthened.
Recommendation #11	The COV recognizes that DOE Order 413.3A is an effective tool for developing and monitoring projects and recommends that NP consider further tailoring in the application of the order for smaller low-risk projects. Prudent reduction in documentation and other requirements of small projects should reduce cost and effort without significantly increasing	NP strives to tailor the use of tools for the management of projects to ensure successful on-budget, on-schedule, on-scope completion with an appropriate level of oversight, review, and documentation. NP will continue its ongoing effort to tailor project management tools and approaches based on the risks of the project, which can include technical, cost and schedule risk, visibility of the project, and degree of interagency and international participation, and in the context of SC practices and the DOE Order 413.3. Successful completion of projects is necessary at any level of investment.

	risk.	Some provisions of O413.3A are required and cannot be tailored by NP.
Recommendation #12	The COV recommends that the NP establish a mechanism for funding travel expenses for all members of review panels and site visits other than using the individuals' research grants.	The Office of Science has directed that program offices, including NP, will reimburse invitational travel for non-laboratory participants in review panels. Written guidance on this policy is in the process of being completed by SC.
Recommendation #13	The COV recommends that the NP continue to pay close attention to the issue of supporting new investigators and new scientific opportunities. Even in tight budget times the importance of investing in the future is crucial.	NP concurs that investment in the future is crucial, and it will continue to pay close attention to supporting new investigators and providing new scientific opportunities identified in the NSAC Long Range Plan, the NSAC Long Range Plan on Isotopes for the Nation's Future, the National Academy 2010 Decadal Survey, and other community and agency reports. In addition to consideration of new grants for new investigators, the SC Early Career Research Program and the SC Graduate Fellowship program, in which NP participates, represent a continuing commitment to stewardship of the future nuclear science workforce.
Recommendation #14	The COV review materials (COV book) should be made available electronically to the Committee two weeks prior to the visit. The NP should work closely with the COV Chair to determine the contents of these materials.	NP will provide COV review materials to the Committee electronically at least two weeks prior to the COV visit. NP will continue to work closely with the COV Chair to determine the contents of these review materials.
Recommendation #15	As part of preparation for the next COV, the COV Chair should solicit comments from the community regarding the operation of the NP.	No action is requested from NP for this recommendation. NP does not concur with this recommendation insofar as the COV is convened to address a specific charge which does not include solicitation of comments from the community.