

(WDTS) Response to the Report of the (BESAC) Committee of Visitors Review of (WDTS Programs)

Date of COV: May 17-19, 2010

Date of Response: November 29, 2010

Program Point of Contact: William J. Valdez, Associate Director, WDTS

COV Recommendation	WDTS Response
Focus its efforts and its resources on its strong programs (SCGF, SULI, CCI, Einstein, Lindau, NSB) and work to improve and expand them to assure future success and impact.	WDTS will work through the SC/DOE budget and planning process to improve and expand the strong programs noted by the COV. WDTS agrees that these programs form the core of WDTS and should be improved and expanded.
Redirect funds from the weak programs (ACTS, FaST, Undergraduate Research Journal, College Guide, RWDC, PST) to funding the recommended changes and expansion in the strong programs (listed above).	WDTS will eliminate some weak programs and engage in planning processes involving WDTS and other stakeholders to improve others identified by the COV.
Improve the procedures used in the solicitation and selection of the Graduate Fellows, building on the experience learned in the first year.	Since the May 2010 COV, SCGF program improvements (improving the application and review processes) have largely been completed. WDTS does not agree with the COV recommendation to reduce the number of reviews read by WDTS staff and will not use a mathematical formula alone to eliminate some candidates due to the potential to dismiss excellent candidates without an appropriate review.
Work diligently and strategically in all programs to increase the participation of students and scholars from underrepresented groups.	Outreach to underrepresented groups and institutions will be given a high priority. WDTS will work with other Federal agencies, including NSF, EPA, NASA, and NIH to review best practices and adopt any that are appropriate for DOE/SC.
Add Ph.D.-level scientists to the staff that have experience in scientific research, educational outreach, and grants program management.	Recommendations about WDTS staffing have been accepted and acted upon. Since June 2010, two Ph.D.-level staff has been added to WDTS and they will be managing the programs (SCGF, SULI, CCI, FaST) that require this level of technical degree.
Increase the level of interaction, cooperation and coordination between staff in WDTS with programs and program officers in the Office of Science in Germantown.	WDTS endorses this recommendation and will improve interactions, cooperation and coordination with SC program offices in Germantown by working through SC-2.
Develop and implement assessment and evaluation procedures for its programs that meet the standards of similar programs in other agencies such as NSF.	Over the past three years, WDTS has developed and implemented assessment and evaluation procedures for its programs that exceed the standards of similar programs. For example, WDTS has been tracking longitudinal data that will enable comparisons with other groups, has developed a workforce analysis capability that is tied to DOE's mission requirements, and cooperates with Federal agencies on the design of its evaluation program to ensure that it incorporates best practices and the most advanced designs.

<p>Use these assessments on a regular basis to improve/modify existing programs.</p>	<p>Evaluation assessments are regularly used by WDTS to improve and modify all WDTS programs. WDTS, for example, initiated the Program Support Proposals (PSP) process in FY09 to better evaluate proposals from DOE national laboratories, which are where the majority of DOE programs are implemented. The PSP process ties all of the WDTS evaluation processes to WDTS programmatic goals and enables WDTS program managers to make data driven decisions on funding and process improvements. We will continue working on the improvement of the PSP process.</p>
<p>Follow the procedure that is routinely used in the Office of Science in developing new programs: specifically, new program development should involve careful planning before implementation, including a national workshop and workshop report attended by stakeholders.</p>	<p>WDTS agrees with this recommendation and will ensure that future program development is consistent with Office of Science business procedures. The upcoming National Academy of Engineering workshop in February 2011 on engineering education is an example of this effort.</p>