

**Workforce Development for Teachers and Scientists (WDTs) Response to the Report of the Basic Energy Sciences Advisory Committee
Committee of Visitors (COV) Review of Fiscal Years 2017-2022**

Date of COV: September 18 – 20, 2023 (in-person)

Date of Response: February 15, 2024

Program Point of Contact: Ping Ge (WDTs)

WDTs Programs/ Activities	COV Recommendations	WDTs Responses
Science Undergraduate Laboratory Internships (SULI)	The COV recommends that the WDTs and hosting Labs work together to develop and implement strategies to increase the number of SULI mentors. Mechanisms could include greater emphasis on DEIA, the inclusion of mentoring in annual performance reviews at the Labs, improved communications, and encouragement from Lab management to the scientific staff, and the implementation of excellence in mentoring / distinguished mentoring awards.	WDTs will continue working with DOE national laboratories to identify and promote best practices of inclusive mentorship in SULI and other programs, including developing a mechanism to recognize outstanding mentors within the DOE complex. Through the Office of Science (SC) Annual Performance Management/Assessment and WDTs Lab Management Review, WDTs will provide feedback to host DOE labs specifically about their mentoring practice for encouraging the participation of more scientific and technical staff in mentoring of WDTs interns.
Community College Internships (CCI)	The COV strongly encourages increased outreach efforts to reach the schools and students, to make them aware that there are outstanding opportunities for technical careers at the National Labs. The COV recommends emphasizing the technician mentor model for CCI so that it is leading to a skilled technical workforce. The COV suggests WDTs consider extending the acceptance of recently graduated community college students up to 2 years upon graduation into the CCI program, if not attending a 4-year institution.	WDTs recognizes that awareness is a major barrier for participation and will increase its outreach efforts nationwide to promote CCI and technical career opportunities at DOE labs, including increasing the engagements with community colleges, hosting additional workshop at conferences, and organizing additional CCI focused recruitment events with DOE labs. WDTs appreciates the COV's highlighting the technician mentor model for preparing a skilled technical workforce at DOE labs. WDTs will work with all host DOE national laboratories to develop appropriate mechanisms for recruiting and supporting technician mentors and explore opportunities for transitioning CCI interns to technician jobs at DOE labs. WDTs will examine the potential impact of the recommended extension on both CCI and SULI. Based on the assessment, WDTs will determine how to address the recommended extension.

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Office of Science Graduate Student Research (SCGSR)	<p>There should be a concerted effort to increase the number of applications to the SCGSR program. The proposed effort could include encouraging more female scientists to participate, and capitalizing on RENEW Recruitment from e.g., Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs).</p>	<p>WDTS has recognized the need for attracting more applicants to the SCGSR program and has made progress since 2022. WDTS will continuously increase outreach efforts with particular emphasis on engagement with historically underrepresented groups, including HBCUs, TCUs, HSIs, and other MSIs. WDTS will work with all DOE national laboratories to identify and implement best practices for recruitment, including DOE laboratory led outreach programs.. WDTS will also examine the current requirements for participation at host DOE labs and explore ways to enable more participation by students with a wider range of family/personal circumstances.</p>
National Science Bowl (NSB)	<p>Broadening participation remains a challenge overall, and for underserved communities, low participation is even more pronounced. The COV recommends the WDTS to explore strategies on recruitment to expand the pool of participants.</p>	<p>WDTS recognizes the challenge of broadening participation. WDTS will continue exploring creative strategies to reach teachers/coaches, principals, and parents, and provide training for volunteers to expand the pool of participants, especially those from underserved school districts. To increase retention, WDTS will follow-up with any coach who self-identifies as representing an underserved community to ensure awareness of available resources.</p>
Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellowship (AEF)	<p>The COV recommends increasing the applicant pool. An increase in stipend commensurate with other competing fellowship opportunities may help.</p>	<p>WDTS will increase its outreach efforts nationwide to raise awareness of the AEF in every region, including collaboration with the AEF alumni network, in-person engagements at teachers' conferences, and promotion of the AEF in collaboration with DOE labs at NSB regional events.</p> <p>WDTS appreciates the COV's recognition of the importance of increasing the stipend to allow the AEF program to remain competitive amongst other Federally sponsored professional development programs for K-12 STEM teachers. Within DOE and SC budget guidelines, WDTS will work with Office of Science and participating Federal agencies to determine possible pathways to address this recommendation.</p>
WDTS Application and Review System (WARS)	<p>The COV recommends that WDTS work with ORISE to simplify and standardize application procedures, where practical, and focus on ease-of-use more generally, particularly for mentors and applicants who may use the system only infrequently.</p>	<p>WDTS will work with ORISE to examine this online system to identify opportunities to streamline the application process and enhance user experiences in various scenarios, including its ongoing effort to leverage responsive design to enhance access and application experience in CCI and SULI programs.</p>

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Budget:	<p>The COV fully supports increasing the WDTS budget to allow for additional staff to allow the programs to grow. However, there should be a commensurate increase in the budget to: (i) Allow an increase in participant stipend, (ii) Allow the full development of WARS 2.0, (iii) Provide travel for the WDTS staff (particularly with regards to outreach, recruitment for the programs), and (IV) Sustain the RENEW initiative, including the potential for adding new staff.</p>	<p>Within DOE and SC budget guidelines, WDTS will work with Office of Science and DOE national laboratories to assess the level of resources (including staffing) required to sustain/grow existing and any new programs/activities, as well as to increase outreach efforts for broadening participation.</p> <p>WDTS will further develop and strengthen the WDTS RENEW Pathway programs for students and educators.</p>
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NOTE: This COV also included a recommendation for continued funding to support WDTS RENEW activities, including consideration of using the FAIR Initiative as seed funding to accelerate the research capabilities of VFP participants. This recommendation was referred to the Office of Deputy Director for Science Programs for consideration and evaluation.