

Committee of Visitors Action Items
MICS Division
November 2004

The Advanced Scientific Computing Advisory Committee (ASCAC) for the Office of Science, was charged with assembling a Committee of Visitors (COV) to review the research programs of the Office of Advanced Scientific Computing Research (ASCR) in Applied Mathematics, Computer Science Research, and Collaboratories Research. The specific charge to the COV included the following four elements:

- An assessment of the efficacy and quality of the processes used to solicit, review, recommend, and document proposal actions and monitor active projects and programs.
- An assessment of how the award process has affected the depth and breadth of portfolio elements and the national and international standing of the portfolio elements.
- Commentary on future directions proposed by ASCR management and on opportunities that might not have been presented
- Commentary on the proposal review process, and on how the COV evaluation process might be improved in the future.

The recommendations of the COV and the corresponding implementation are as follows:

1. The COV applauds the development of program management guidelines for ASCR) and believes that such guidelines should be used in the future to make the review processes more comprehensive, uniform, consistent, and easy to evaluate.

We have begun developing guidelines for the MICS program managers. A first draft of these guidelines will be completed by the end of CY2004. The document will be presented to the program managers for concurrence during the first part of CY2005.

2. The COV was particularly pleased to learn of the ASCR commitment to professional development of new scientists and applauds the Early Career PI Program, which has led to funding of more than 20 new investigators over the past two years. The COV believes that the ASCR would benefit from a formal longitudinal evaluation of the efficacy of this important and apparently very successful new program, which was started in 2002.

We completely agree with the COV of the importance of tracking and assessing the impact of the ECPI program on the careers of these young scientists. We intend to initiate a longitudinal review of this program as soon as sufficient data is available.

3. The COV noted that the cross-cutting Scientific Discovery through Advanced Computing (SciDAC) program has had a major influence on all three programs under

review. There was concern within the COV over SciDAC's future, and the COV believes that ASCR should prepare a strategic plan that covers the future of SciDAC.

Our Office agrees with the COV that SciDAC is important to our programs. We have developed a draft outline of a new strategic plan for SciDAC and have presented it to the upper management of the Office of Science. During FY2005 we will seek community input on the future directions for SciDAC and incorporate it into our strategic plan.

4. At the start of the meeting, the COV was informed that newly developed guidelines would be promulgated to ensure, amongst other things, that "university and lab proposals will be handled equally". The COV believes that ASCR need not mandate complete equality between the lab and university processes, since ASCR clearly has a major and unique mission to support cutting-edge lab science. However, the COV feels that both sets of the folders should contain sufficient information to detail the decision-making process and track continued progress for renewed awards, and that similar (or identical) robust standards for tracking decision processes and documentation should apply to both types of proposals.

A major recommendation of the COV is that ASCR develop a more comprehensive and consistent approach to program review documentation. Formal records should include the key information that document the process and justify the resulting decision in context.

We have initiated the development of a comprehensive electronic data base and tracking system for proposal control and records. This system will track both university and laboratory proposals. We have added a new IPA staff member examine the workflow in our office and to develop and coordinate the data base tracking system. The design specifications for the system using DocuShare will be completed by the end of CY2004, and the implementation by the end of CY2005.