Office of International Science and Engineering
Response to the Committee of Visitors Report
April 11-13, 2005

The Committee of Visitors (COV) for the Office of International Science and Engineering (OISE) met on April 11-13, 2005 at the National Science Foundation (NSF) to review OISE's program and non-award activities during fiscal years 2002, 2003, and 2004. OISE is greatly appreciative of the COV's energetic commitment, comprehensive review, and the positive assessment of the Office's programs and non-award activities in the COV Report.

The period covered by this COV—2002-2004—represented a transitional stage for OISE's programmatic initiatives. During the first two years, OISE programs were organized along geographic regional lines, and proposals were received according to guidelines in Program Solicitation 03-559, *International Opportunities for Scientists and Engineers*. In FY 2004, OISE programs were reorganized into categories for collaborative research, developing globally engaged U.S. scientists and engineers, workshops and planning visits, and multilateral organizations. A series of new program solicitations was released to replace NSF 03-559, but most of the proposals awarded during 2004 had been submitted according to the former program guidelines and thus were reviewed under those guidelines.

The COV also examined OISE's non-award activities—which include representing NSF in international meetings, staffing the NSF Director for international-related activities, hosting foreign visitors, liaising with foreign counterpart organizations, exploring possible leveraging opportunities with non-NSF entities, administering NSF-wide international services such as travel clearances, etc. The COV found uniform recognition of the important function that OISE plays within the Foundation, as well as a wide appreciation of the knowledge of international affairs in OISE, which the COV stated is "a role unique within NSF." The COV commented on the support that OISE gives to the international efforts of the directorates as well as other offices and agencies of the U.S. Government. They acknowledged the enabling roles in the negotiation and execution of international activities and issues that arise in the directorates. The value of these OISE activities is "generally acknowledged to be far greater than is implied by the OISE budget."

The COV Report contains a number of important recommendations that address:

- OISE programmatic issues, e.g.,
   strengthening criteria and reviews (recommendation 1, 2, 15);
   PI diversity (2, 13, 16); data collection (3, 11, 12);
   specific programs – PIRE (7, 8), IRFP (9), multilateral organizations (10);
   leveraging non-NSF sources (14);
- Non-award activities (18, 19)
- OISE mission and role within the Foundation (4, 5, 6, 21, 23)
- Office personnel and resources (20, 24)

The COV's full recommendations and OISE's responses follow—consistent with the order in which the recommendations appear in the COV Report. _Please Note:_ The COV Report is organized according to the topics in the COV Template. In the OISE Response, numbers were inserted for each recommendation. The numbers do not appear in the COV Report itself.

The COV Report outline is:

(A) Review of the Process by which Decisions are Made on Proposals Submitted to OISE
　　　　　Recommendations 1 - 3
(B) Results of OISE Awards as they Relate to NSF's Current Strategic Goals and Annual Performance Goals
　　　　　No specific recommendations
(C) Other Topics
　　　　　No specific recommendations
(D) Recommendations on Other Relevant Issues
　　　　　Recommendations 4 - 24

A. Review of the Process by which Decisions are Made on Proposals Submitted to OISE

The COV was provided an Adjusted Stratified Random Sample of 300 jackets. The sample was "adjusted" in that the stratified random sample was altered to make it representative of the portfolio for the various geographic regions. One such alteration was to include "dummy" jackets that represent awards made by other directorates to which OISE contributed funds. The COV examined approximately 125 out of the 300 jackets, which represented the range of proposals supported by OISE: cooperative research projects, planning grants, workshops, postdoctoral fellowships, dissertation improvements awards, and undergraduate opportunities.

Recommendation 1

We recommend that OISE staff ensure that these international reviewers understand NSF's scientific merit and broader impact criteria. Letters to all referees should clearly state the additional criteria for review of international projects proposed for OISE funding.

Response and Action

OISE agrees with this recommendation and will include an expanded explanation of the NSF review criteria for reviewers. In many cases, OISE programs and particularly the most recent program solicitation specifically articulate criteria addressing the international dimension. OISE will review the current standard letter to reviewers and insure that all criteria have ample explanation.

Examples of such additional criteria are in the reviewer letter for the new Partnerships in Research and Education Program. They are:
- Importance and coherence of the international collaboration model, including its effectiveness as an intellectual collaboration for all participating scientists, engineers, and educators;
- Quality and innovation of the proposed research efforts, and the appropriateness of the international collaboration to these efforts;
- Quality and innovation in the planned education activities, and in their integration with the research efforts;
- Effectiveness of career development opportunities and provision for developing an international perspective and an international research experience;
- The effectiveness of the strategy for preparing a globally-engaged science and engineering workforce;
- Appropriateness of the management plan and organizational structure in assuring effective allocation of project resources and participation by project members;
- Appropriateness of the budget;
- Commitment of the institutions to achieving the project's goals and to sustaining the partnership beyond the term of an award.

In addition, the reviewer letter for the International Research Experience for Students Program asks reviewers to evaluate the merit of the proposed international collaboration and the expected mutual benefit to be derived from the contribution of the scientists or engineers in each country.

Commenting on the attention of OISE staff in the review process to "due process, fairness, quality and distributional issues related to women, minorities, geographies, disciplines, and developing countries," the COV stated:

Recommendation 2

> Although OISE performed as well or better than NSF as a whole on some distributional issues, *we recommend that OISE work to increase the number of minorities and women supported and capitalize on the opportunities provided by international collaborations with developing countries.*

Response and Action

OISE is deeply committed and actively promotes the participation of underrepresented minorities and women in international activities. This is in keeping with the Foundation's goal to broaden participation in science and engineering. One way to do that is to increase the number of proposals from those communities. Outreach efforts through Dear Colleague Letters posted on the OISE website and program officer visits to minority-serving institutions are two possibilities. Ensuring that women and minorities serve on OISE program panels, and that diversity is explicit in the selection criteria considered by these panels, are two others.

OISE will also explore offering current OISE grantees the opportunity to apply for graduate research supplements for women and underrepresented minority students. Such a program exists in two divisions of the Directorate for Engineering, BES and ECS.

In response to the second part of the recommendation that OISE capitalize on the opportunities provided by international collaborations with developing countries, OISE continues to view as a priority its efforts to initiate collaborations with developing countries. The OISE Developing Country Team will continue to explore creative partnerships and approaches to working with developing countries. The Team is preparing a presentation to the Advisory Committee for International Science and Engineering at its June 2005 meeting highlighting current efforts and opportunities for future activities.

Stating that they were impressed by the ability of OISE staff to provide data on short notice [during the meeting], the COV members observed that:

Recommendation 3

> *NSF's Enterprise Information System (EIS) needs improvement, generally and for OISE in particular.* For OISE, there is need to track leverage statistics on co-funded projects, international activities embedded in the proposals of other directorates. For NSF generally, there is need to ensure that program officers and staff do a better job of coding information and that FastLane be modified to adequately capture reviewer demographics.

Response and Action

This recommendation, as well as Recommendations 11 and 12, focus on the collection and analysis of data on NSF awards for international activities. To address these concerns, we have combined our responses as follows:

NSF's **Enterprise Information System (EIS)** is a central reporting and analysis system that provides trend analysis, financial management, and personnel information on a variety of topics. It is available to all internal NSF users. "Leverage" statistics are available from EIS data and reports of OISE co-funding activity may be produced for each directorate and division, indicating both the numbers and the amounts of the awards.

A second significant source of information on international activities is the **International Implications data,** which is entered by program officers throughout the Foundation (if appropriate) at the time that awards are made. These data includes the type of international activity, the country or countries where the activity takes place, and the amount of funding designated for the activity. OISE agrees that program officers and staff need to do a better job of coding this international activity information. OISE will work with program officers and IT staff to improve the collection of the data. For example, OISE could use internal staff memos, request eJacket data entry quality checks, and suggest NSF Academy training courses to improve the use and accuracy of the International Implications data elements.

We agree that **improved reviewer demographics** are desirable. Discussions are underway within the Foundation on merging the PI and reviewer databases. Currently the great majority of PIs enter demographic information in FastLane, while the majority of reviewers do not. Since many PIs also serve as reviewers, by merging the two separate systems, NSF would obtain statistically significant demographic information on the subset of reviewers who are also PIs.

B. Results of OISE Awards as they Relate to NSF's Current Strategic Goals and Annual Performance Goals

No specific recommendations.

C. Program Areas in Need of Improvement or Gaps (if any) within Program Areas

No specific recommendations.

D. Recommendations on Other Relevant Issues

1. OISE Mission

Commenting on the funding of international science [and engineering] within and throughout the Foundation, the COV expressed support for OISE assuming a higher profile within the agency. "As international activities play an increasingly important role within NSF, we encourage the OISE to take a leadership role in determining strategy and action for the direction of international science and engineering as it serves both the agency and the larger interests of the United States, consistent with the mission of NSF."

Recommendation 4

> *The COV recommends that OISE develop a mission statement and action plan that recognizes the increasingly international character of knowledge creation and research activities. The action plan should be articulated throughout NSF and to the scientific and engineering community.*

Response and Action

NSF understands well the global nature of scientific discovery and actively integrates the international character of knowledge creation and research activities within the Foundation's strategic plan. Currently the NSF Strategic Plan covers Fiscal Years 2003 – 2008, but it is scheduled to be updated in FY 2006. Now that OISE has moved into the Office of the Director, it is better positioned to articulate statements about international activities within the Foundation's overall plan. In addition, the arrival of a new OISE Director in the upcoming months represents the beginning of a new era and offers the opportunity to map out a future-looking strategic action plan.

The International Coordinating Committee, a group that cuts across the Foundation, examines Foundation-wide, international-related challenges and activities. OISE will work both through the ICC as well as directly with the research directorates and offices at all levels to inform NSF colleagues on OISE's mission and activities.

Recommendation 5

> *OISE needs to be proactive in maintaining US international presence and leadership. OISE should identify centers of scientific and engineering excellence abroad and establish or strengthen connections. Creative mechanisms for redirecting scientific talent to the US should be developed.*

Response and Action

OISE agrees that it must remain proactive in maintaining U.S. international presence and leadership. OISE program officers and the heads of its overseas offices have been proactive

in establishing solid working relationships with counterpart agencies and organizations abroad. Examples are the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, the National Natural Science Foundation in China, CONACyT in Mexico, the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) in France, the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) in Germany, the National Research Foundation (NRF) in South Africa, the Russian Foundation for Basic Research, and the Czech Ministry of Education. Over the years, senior officials and program officers from these and other organizations have held numerous discussions, participated in seminars and workshops, and funded cooperative research projects. Upon that basis, a cadre of U.S. science and engineering researchers, postdoctoral fellows, graduate students, and undergraduates have gained an international perspective.

Through this network of international funding agencies and international scientists and engineers, OISE has learned of centers of excellence across the globe. Identifying other nations' centers of excellence and being aware of other nations' mechanisms for supporting these centers of excellence allows OISE to promote partnerships with U.S .centers. OISE will continue to identify centers of excellence around the world and work to strengthen partnerships. The Partnerships for International Research and Education Program is OISE's first long-term programmatic effort to link centers of excellence. OISE also works with the NSF directorates to identify international centers of excellence and explore opportunities for partnerships.

One of the most effective means by which information about foreign centers of excellence is obtained is through the Embassy Science Fellows Program, administered by the Department of State and coordinated within NSF by OISE. Fellows from NSF (and certain other U.S. Government agencies) spend about two months at foreign posts as visiting "scientist/ engineer-consultants" to the Embassy. During their visits, NSF program officers conduct assessments of in-country science and engineering institutions, fields, and priorities, and meet with leading scientists and science administrators. The information they gather is made available to OISE and research program directors throughout the Foundation.

Facilitating the flow of science and engineering talent to the United States is of major concern to the Foundation. OISE continues to serve as a resource on visa policies both to the scientific and engineering community at large and to the Department of State. OISE continues to track the visa situation, providing timely information to NSF senior management and program officers as the policies evolve.

2. International Programmatic Aspects of OISE Mission

International Programmatic Aspects of OISE Mission: Cooperative Grants

The COV addressed specific programs and programmatic aspects including the new Partnerships program, the International Research Fellowship Program, support for multilateral organizations, award/review and metrics, and letter review processes. The COV discussed at length the transition of OISE's program from one that supported primarily small bilateral cooperative grants to one that emphasizes larger partnerships and the development of global scientists and engineers. In particular,

the COV Report commented that the cooperative grants "provide a valued source of funding for junior scientists seeking to establish international collaborations and set the groundwork necessary for initial data collection necessary for formulating large grants."

The COV was especially interested in discussing the OISE cofunding and supplements to research directorate grants, as well as the reverse – research directorate contributions to OISE awards. In the COV Report, several examples are cited of how small grants have led to larger NSF grants. Cognizant of the fact that responsibility for smaller grants is now shifting to the other directorates, the COV stated that "These grant activities should not be allowed to wane without attention."

Recommendation 6

During this period of transition, OISE staff must work to educate the rest of NSF about the need to identify and continue to fund these opportunities. As OISE shifts its focus to a smaller number of larger awards, it must develop an action plan to promote its stated mission of "a foundation-wide vision of international research and education" within other NSF directorates. We urge that both OISE and NSF as a whole work together to find means to continue funding of these small awards, preferably via OISE, given its regional connections, expertise and stated mission of funding junior investigators

Response and Action

The issue of educating not only the rest of NSF but also the science and engineering community as a whole about the changes in OISE program structure and funding is an important one and requires continued attention. As explained in the "Overview of International Science and Engineering 2002-2004," presented to the COV, the shift in OISE activities towards supporting larger, innovative international partnerships and research and education experiences for early career scientists and engineers was the result of an in-depth, year-long, Office-wide review and strategic planning effort. As a result of this shift, the small-scale cooperative research projects were ended.

As explained in the Overview: *"NSF Directorates and Divisions have always had the ability to fund investments in international collaboration if international collaboration is an essential element of the research. But previously, many saw international funding narrowly as OISE's responsibility. The decision to shift small international research investments more broadly across the Foundation changed the way program officers viewed their portfolios, their own responsibility for international research, and their perception of OISE's role and its relationship to the rest of the Foundation. While OISE plays a leadership role in international, it cannot assume all of the international funding responsibilities. Likewise, its portfolio needs to complement the research directorates and have the ability to be experimental. This change was an important first step in a larger, ongoing effort to develop an integrated, NSF-wide international strategy for the entire Foundation."*

OISE will continue to discuss its programmatic changes within NSF and with the community. We will attempt to assess the need for the small awards based on these discussions and respond in partnership with the directorates. It is important that OISE have the ability to develop new programs and work across the Foundation to respond to community needs.

To educate the science and engineering community about the recent changes in OISE programs, a "Dear Colleague Letter on OISE Support for International Activities" was posted on the OISE website. This letter outlines the three major new programs: Partnerships for International Research and Education, Global Scientists and Engineers, and Planning Visits and Workshops. OISE will continue these efforts and take advantage of workshops, seminars, and regional conferences as opportunities to meet with the community, explain program changes, and get their feedback. OISE will also continue to work with the Advisory Committee for International Science and Engineering, which has recently been elevated in status to become a full advisory committee. The Advisory Committee is an important tool for outreach to the community and OISE will seek its advice.

In order to inform other directorates and offices in NSF about the OISE changes, the Office developed a set of guidelines explaining the priorities for OISE co-funding of new awards and supplements to existing awards originating in the research directorates. This guidance has been distributed to NSF program officers and has been posted on the OISE internal webpage. In addition, in the fall of 2004, OISE identified liaison teams for each of the NSF directorates and programmatic offices. These liaison teams have met with their program managers and discussed the OISE changes and the co-funding guidelines. Another NSF in-reach mechanism established in early 2005 is the *OISE Weekly*, which is distributed to NSF leadership and members of the International Coordinating Committee to inform them about upcoming and recent international activities.

International Programmatic Aspects: PIRE Program

The COV expressed concern that the period of transition to "new high-risk programs such as the Partnerships for International Research and Education (PIRE)" represents a "bold step whose outcome is uncertain."

Recommendation 7 (See also Recommendation 2)

During this transition in the OISE Program, we recommend that the partnerships with developing countries be preserved and expanded as an integral part of the structure of the program and allocation of funds.

Response and Action

OISE agrees strongly that partnerships with developing countries be preserved and expanded as an integral part of the structure of the program and allocation of funds. Looking for

creative ways to do this, such as creating partnerships with other US Government agencies and funding sources, will continue to be a priority for the Office. In the Partnerships for International Research and Education Program, a significant number of proposals involved collaborations with scientists and engineers in developing countries.

Recommendation 8

Evaluation of the program would be facilitated by routine requirement of final reports and follow up with the PI regarding post-award progress. We recommend that annual reports and periodic site visits be required for large grants.

Response and Action

NSF requires that final project reports be submitted for all awards. OISE has been working to make sure that we receive these reports, and that we keep track and monitor progress during the course of the awards. As part of the new OISE Partnerships Program, periodic site visits will be undertaken during the five-year projects. In addition, all grantees will be given funds to attend a grantees meeting at NSF to facilitate dissemination of information and evaluation of project outcomes.

International Programmatic Aspects: International Research Fellowships

Praising the quality of proposals in the International Research Fellowship Program and the pre- and post-award communication with fellows. The COV recommended that:

Recommendation 9

A system of tracking the future success of fellowship recipients [should] be developed. We encourage OISE to seek mechanisms to shorten the dwell time. OISE should consider allocating and seeking additional resources to preserve and increase the funding rate for this program.

Response and Action

OISE has explored different ways and participates in an interagency group focused on this question (the Alumni Issues Roundtable, coordinated by the Department of State) to improve tracking of student and postdoctoral fellowship awardees. OISE agrees that it would be useful to track the future success of fellowship recipients. However, it is difficult to do because 1) it would have to be voluntary on the part of the fellows; 2) given the current state of the fellows' careers, many are highly mobile and often no forwarding contact information is available; and 3) it is an extremely labor-intensive task not feasible given current OISE staffing levels. One approach that we have been using is to ask the fellows to serve as reviewers for proposals in subsequent years, thus keeping them engaged in the program.

On the matter of reducing the dwell time for fellowship proposals, OISE is looking at the various steps involved in the process in order to identify areas where we may be more efficient. OISE will review both the current program solicitation and internal process with the purpose of improving program management efficiency as well as understanding of the U.S. community's needs and interest in the program.

International Programmatic Aspects: Multilateral Activities

Commenting that approximately one-third of the OISE budget goes to "mandates or mandated dues for membership in multilateral organizations,"

Recommendation 10

The COV encourages NSF leadership to shield the OISE discretionary budget from these demands to the extent possible.

Response and Action

This recommendation stems from the concern expressed by the COV that dues to multilateral organizations such as the International Council for Science (ICSU), the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF), and the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) were having a detrimental impact on the OISE budget. In other words, the funds spent on such dues might otherwise be spent on other international program activities. With regard to IIASA, OISE has raised the issue with the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and it is being discussed through interagency discussions.

International Programmatic Aspects: Award/Review and Metrics

Observing that "additional information is needed for effective international program tracking and monitoring," the COV made specific recommendations to improve tracking and monitoring:

Recommendations 11-12

OISE should identify the extent to which OISE is leveraging co-funding and the extent that international activities embedded in the proposals of other directorates.

NSF in general should ensure that program officers and staff do a better job of coding information and that FastLane be modified to adequately capture reviewer demographics.

Response and Action

Please see Response to Recommendation #3.

Recommendation 13

OISE should continue to maintain a balance between junior/senior PI's, diversity, discipline and geographic distribution. We recommend that awards be tracked according to discipline, geographic location and type of award.

Response and Action

OISE will continue to maintain a balance among junior/senior PIs, diversity, discipline, and geographic distribution within its three major new programs.

For OISE awards, Special Program Data Elements are coded on each award to permit tracking according to the directorate or division most closely associated with the award, the level of support for various categories of PIs (students, postdocs, senior scientists), and the type of award. For data on country or countries in which the international activity takes place, OISE consults the International Implications Data.

Recommendation 14

OISE efforts to leverage funds from non-NSF sources to support collaboration with developing countries should continue and expand (this should include other governments, private foundations and individuals). The success of such efforts should be tracked and evaluated.

Response and Action

OISE agrees that efforts to leverage funds from non-NSF sources to support collaboration with developing countries should continue and expand and that the success of these efforts should be tracked and evaluated. Efforts are currently underway to explore avenues of collaboration with such organizations as the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department of Energy (DOE), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the World Bank, and the European Union. Talks are also being held with non-governmental organizations, such as the U.S.-Mexico Foundation for Science, the Costa Rica-USA Foundation, and various foundations.

International Programmatic Aspects: Letter Review Process

The COV recommended the following to improve the process of obtaining ad hoc reviewers:

Recommendation 15 (See also Recommendation 1)

The COV recommends that OISE staff ensure these international reviewers understand NSF's scientific merit and broader impact criteria. Letters to all referees should clearly state the additional criteria for review of international projects proposed for OISE funding.

Response and Action

This recommendation was addressed under Recommendation 1.

Recommendation 16 (See also Recommendation 2)

> *The COV recommends that OISE work to increase the number of minorities and women supported and capitalize on the opportunities provided by international collaborations with developing countries.*

Response and Action

This recommendation was addressed under Recommendation 2.

Recommendation 17

> *The dwell time should be improved [for OISE in general].*

Response and Action

The Foundation's "time to decision" annual performance goal is: *"For 70 percent of proposals, be able to inform applicants whether their proposals have been declined or recommended for funding **within six months** of deadline or target date, or receipt date, whichever is later."*

In FY 2004, the average dwell time for all OISE proposal actions was 5.35 months, which is under the Foundation goal of six months. In FY 2003, the average was 5.72, and in FY 2002, it was 5.74 months. Thus the trend has been downward. Efforts will continue to be made, however, to reduce the dwell time in order that PIs may be made aware of the decisions on their proposals in a timely manner.

3. Other OISE Non-Award Activities

The COV acknowledged that the OISE staff spent about half of their time on non-award activities that are highly valued:

Recommendations 18 and 19

The office should articulate in more detail the value and scope of these [non-award] activities to the rest of NSF, the scientific and engineering community, and the US government.

The COV recommends that these [non-award] activities be quantified and evaluated since they are such a large and important part of the work of OISE.

<u>Responses and Action</u>

OISE will continue its efforts to articulate the value and scope of the non-award activities conducted by the staff. It is estimated that these activities may consume up to 50 percent of an individual program officer's time. They include preparing briefing materials for the NSF Director and Deputy Director and other senior officials who are undertaking foreign visits or hosting foreign visitors, meeting with foreign visitors and planning detailed schedules for them as they seek to learn about the NSF, participating in U.S. Government interagency working groups and meetings and preparing documents on behalf of NSF for international intergovernmental activities, etc.

The impact of these activities is seen in NSF's ability to maintain its international leadership role, the nature of the Foundation's international relations, and its ability to develop new and creative partnerships. It is difficult to quantify and evaluate these non-award activities because of their ever-changing nature and time-dependent deadlines, and because they represent a stewardship role that is difficult to measure in the short term.

<u>Recommendation 20</u>

> *Allocation of adequate funds for [staff] travel is important to the proper function of OISE.*

Response and Action

OISE agrees that adequate funds should be provided for both foreign and domestic travel for OISE staff. As noted previously in this report, OISE would like to increase the amount available for travel for outreach and site visits to minority serving institutions.

4. Communications and OISE Leadership

The COV Report states:

Discussions with other NSF (non-OISE) staff suggest that communication between OISE and other parts of NSF has at times been ineffective. OISE has not clearly communicated the new vision, plans and changes in function of this office. While the COV recognizes that communication is a two-way enterprise, this needs improvement.

<u>Recommendation 21 (See also Recommendation 6)</u>

> *OISE should make efforts to disseminate information systematically on its evolving role and programs throughout NSF.*

Response and Action

OISE will continue its efforts to disseminate information on its evolving role and programs throughout NSF. As mentioned in the response to Recommendation 6, OISE has established

liaison teams with the other research directorates and offices as well as informs senior NSF management about ongoing and future international activities through the *OISE Weekly*.

OISE's transition to management of a small number of large awards creates a need for new ongoing relationships between program officers and PI's.

Recommendation 22

> *The COV recommends that OISE Program Officers consider adopting some of the best practices developed by Program Officers with experience in managing large ongoing collaborative projects (such as the MRSEC's).*

Response and Action

OISE agrees with the COV recommendation that program officers adopt some of the best practices used by NSF program officers who manage large ongoing collaborative projects. This is especially appropriate to the Partnerships Program. The effort is ongoing, as several OISE program staff have recently participated in NSF's Centers Effective Practices Forum, leading a discussion on international collaboration, including the Partnerships Program.

Recommendation 23

> *The COV recommends that the OISE director be included in the NSF Assistant Directors' Meeting to facilitate needed communication with the rest of NSF and participation in priority setting and budgetary discussions.*

Response and Action

OISE agrees with the COV recommendation that the OISE Director be included in the Assistant Directors' meetings.

The OISE requires an experienced, highly skilled, visible director to lead its efforts during a time of administrative and functional transition.

Recommendation 24

> *It is important that all efforts be made to identify and select a new director in a timely manner.*

Response and Action

OISE agrees that it is important to identify and select a new Office Director in a timely manner.