

Here are some notes from the LTER Executive Board meeting that we had on December 3, 2014:

Attending: Charlie Driscoll, Evelyn Gaiser, Anne Giblin, Peter Groffman, Sherri Johnson, Margaret O'Brien, Mark Ohman, Deb Peters, Emma Rosi-Marshall, Mary Spivey, Gus Shaver, Bob Waide,

Items discussed:

1. Approval of meeting minutes from September and October.

Ohman moved, Johnson second. Approved.

2. Our visit to NSF on November 10, 2014.

Groffman is finalizing a letter summarizing the discussions and will send it to the NSF LTER team (sent December 10). We expect that the letter will be "sent up the line" to Penny Firth and Alan Tessier but he will check on this.

3. Follow-up activities to our visit to NSF

The letter describes a series of follow up activities that we will undertake to help sites write better proposals. These activities include:

- Conceptual models – how to make these better. John Blair has begun to compile the conceptual models used by different sites. We should have some group discussions at the mini-symposium, the Science Council and the upcoming ASM meetings.
- Quantitative models – how are we using these? What are NSF's expectations? As with conceptual models, we should make a compilation of what sites are doing and have some discussions about this topic at upcoming meetings.
- Probation – developing "best practices" to help sites emerge from probation. Anne Giblin took the lead on this for the November meeting.
- Leadership transitions. How have different sites successfully done this over the years?

4. Report from the LNO:

The RFP for the network "communications" office is still not out, but anticipate that it will be out by the end of the year, that proposals will be due in April and that funding will start by October 1. This will create a six month gap between the LNO current funding and the new office. Transition funding (700K, less than 50% of normal funding) is being provided to cover the Science Council and ASM meetings and limited NIS functions. It is not clear if all these things can be accomplished with 700K. The LNO will drop down to 4 or 5 people on staff, mostly part time, mostly on NIS. We need to be clear to the community about just what functions (e.g., internal communications) are going to be lost, and when.

A separate proposal for participant support costs for the ASM is pending, to fund 10 people from each site. It is not likely that the full amount will be awarded.

The other great challenge is that there is still no plan or timeline for an RFP for the data piece; this may not emerge until fall 2015. The LTER data managers have submitted a proposal to fund a survey of different communities, hoping to start in January. The goal of this effort would be to produce a vision of what a cross agency data management center would look like and what it would do.

5. Science Council meeting in May

We normally budget 70K for this meeting, but this is going to be very tough this year. Waide has a target budget of 30K for this meeting, which would be enough for 30 people, perhaps a few more. Maybe just lead PIs, no committee chairs, no second person, no LNO people except for Bob. The LNO

will not be able to pay for housing and airfares directly – people will have to get reimbursed due to the transition to the new award.

Should we do a virtual meeting? Would the LNO get less money if we did this? NOTE: Groffman spoke with Saran Twombly on December 9 and she was supportive of the idea of a virtual meeting.

The proposed science topic for the meeting this year is flux of inorganic material (Rosi-Marshall, Grimm, Stanley, leads). Let's stick with this but with a smaller group. Need to identify key extra people that might need to be invited.

6. LTER synthesis postdocs to be run through SESYNC.

The NSF LTER program has agreed to team up with the National Socio-Environmental Synthesis Center (SESYNC) to support 2-3 'synthesis' postdoctoral fellows. This collaboration came about when SESYNC was proposing a new, immersion postdoctoral program focused on data synthesis and LTER was simultaneously asking for funding for synthesis postdocs. The combination is ideal, largely because SESYNC has very sophisticated cyberinfrastructure and analytical tools in house, and because the LTER postdocs would be part of a cohort of synthesis postdocs all of whom can learn from one another.

The procedure that SESYNC has used to solicit applications for their synthesis postdocs involves coupling applicants with a 'registry' of potential research collaborators and mentors – research scientists who have ideas for data synthesis and the requisite skills to mentor a postdoc in a particular topic or area. Pre-screened applicants receive a 'registry' of potential collaborator/mentors, identify one or two individuals with whom they would particularly like to work, and propose to co-develop a postdoc application with this collaborator. The collaborator receives a month of summer salary for his or her efforts, and the postdoc receives money to travel to visit his or her collaborator twice a year.

SESYNC has developed its own 'registry' of socio-environmental scholars over the past 3 years. These people are probably not ideal collaborators or mentors for the LTER synthesis postdocs. Margaret Palmer has asked NSF to develop an LTER registry independently, and Bob Waide is going to help with this. The research collaborators are asked to write a brief application that includes 1) a brief description of ideas for a collaborative, long-term ecological synthesis project (1 page), b) a short bio sketch, c) a link to the mentor's professional web site and, if relevant, the mentor's LTER web site, and d) a brief statement (500 words) on expectations for the proposed collaboration, including expectations of the postdoctoral fellow and ideas on facilitating a productive mentoring relationship (much like NSF's postdoctoral mentoring plan). The LNO will compile these mentor applications. Ultimately, they will be provided to postdoctoral fellow applicants (via a web link, perhaps). Proposals for registry listing should be submitted to the LNO by February 1. We should be organized and write strong listings. Maybe get Margaret Palmer to join one of our calls to talk about this?

7. Mini-symposium – Thursday, March 5.

Childers, Stanley and Mack are organizing science program, which will focus on "primary production." We will have an Executive Board meeting the day before. What else should we do; meet with the new BIO AD? Congressional visits?

We should begin our series of follow up activities from the November 10 meeting. Perhaps we should pick up the quantitative modeling piece first. Need someone to lead an effort to compile the models that sites are currently using and to lead the discussion. We should focus on how the models drive the science as well as on the specific approaches that are being used.