

**Information about the
National Science Foundation (NSF)
Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate Program (AGEP)
Reverse Site Visit Guided Interview
(May 2005)**

The main benefit of a face-to-face meeting with panelists—versus the submission of a written report—is that it allows the reverse-site-visit (RSV) panel to listen to the project staff in their own words, then guide the proceedings according to specific issues or concerns that may arise.

However, unlike a site visit, the project staff will not be on their home campus with ready access to files and personnel. Responses to a variety of questions should be prepared, and supported by reasonable data. The agenda of the meeting, expected presentation format, and any unusual information requested by NSF or the RSV panel will be provided to the project staff in advance of the reverse site visit. The intent of the process is for project staff to hear the concerns of NSF via the reverse site visit and use this advisement to make changes in the administration of the grant. Being prepared at the meeting will lessen the amount of follow-up correspondence that is required in the days and weeks following the reverse site visit.

1. Background Documentation

The following materials should be well familiar to the project personnel as well as the RSV panelists. It need not be brought to the meeting, since in-house copies will be available at NSF and, if necessary, distributed to the RSV members by NSF well in advance of the meeting.

- Grant Proposal Guide
- Program solicitation
- Original proposal
- Proposal amendments
- Cooperative Agreement
- Annual reports
- Final reports
- Specific concerns identified by NSF program staff or auditors

2. Graduate School/Department Recruitment Strategies and Admissions Strategies

RSV panelists will expect to be briefed on the project's recruitment and admission activities, including as appropriate: tools for recruiting (including websites and printed materials), uses of databases for graduate student referrals or databases of programs that

encourage UM entering graduate schools, and on- and off-campus recruitment strategies. Also of interest will be:

- ❑ Summaries of recruitment results and concerns
- ❑ Summaries of admission results and concerns
- ❑ As handouts: Recruitment solicitation materials

3. Graduate School/Departmental Admission and Retention Patterns

Site visitors will expect to be briefed on the project's admission and retention patterns, including as appropriate presentations about admission outcomes and assessments of progress to degree. Participant numbers and demographics data referring to individuals involved with the project's activities—nominally staff, faculty and students at all levels but, as appropriate, corporate partners and state or local government agencies should be collected for each year of the project. Site visitors may ask for clarification about the following:

- ❑ Application and admission patterns within your alliance
- ❑ Your alliance's data on retention patterns, including challenges associated with monitoring graduate student progress
- ❑ Mentoring activities
- ❑ Internship opportunities
- ❑ How graduate student progress is monitored
- ❑ Changes in recruitment and admissions strategies and policies that can be attributed to AGEP.

4. Graduate Student Support Programs and Environment

Site visitors will expect to be briefed on the project's support programs and campus environment, and may ask for clarification about the following:

- ❑ Results of institutional climate studies / assessments
- ❑ The full range of student support programs associated with your alliance (including financial, academic, and informal social support)
- ❑ Strategies to promote full inclusion of URM's into graduate school activities
- ❑ Efforts to promote and facilitate student-student interactions

5. Faculty Mentoring and Socialization

Site visitors will expect to be briefed on faculty mentoring and socialization, and may ask for clarification about the following:

- ❑ Recruitment of faculty mentors

- Training / orientation of faculty mentors
- Matching of faculty mentors with graduate students
- Faculty assistance with troubleshooting
- Recognition of faculty mentoring activities
- Orientation of graduate student mentees
- Opportunities for professional socialization

6. Administrative Infrastructure

Site visitors will expect to be briefed on the project's administrative infrastructure, and may ask for clarification about the following:

- Overall management of your graduate programs (including partner institutions)
- Role of the AGEP staff in the overall management structure of the graduate program(s)
- Management of graduate student financial support
- Allocation of office space associated with the AGEP administrative infrastructure
- Plans for institutionalization of administrative infrastructure
- Cost-sharing / leveraging of alliance resources

7. Preparation for the Professoriate

Site visitors will expect to be briefed on the project's administrative infrastructure, and may ask for clarification about the following:

- Opportunities for professional socialization
- Career guidance and placement assistance
- Specific preparation for the professoriate
- Preparation of students for effective teaching, learning, and assessment
- Training of students in portfolio development
- Exposure of students to issues associated with tenure
- Training of students in developing and managing a research team

8. Diversification of the Faculty

Site visitors will expect to be briefed on the project's strategies and plans for diversifying the faculty within the alliance, and may ask for clarification about the following:

- Collaboration (within the alliance and across alliances) related to postdoctoral appointments and minority faculty recruitment

- ❑ Faculty development programs (new faculty)
- ❑ Changes in institutional hiring policies / strategies since AGEP
- ❑ Institutional targets / goals for minority faculty recruitment

9. Evaluation and Assessment Site visitors will expect to be briefed on the project's evaluation and assessment plans, and may ask for clarification about the following:

- ❑ Infrastructure for comprehensive evaluation and assessment
- ❑ Indicators for assessing effectiveness of project components / activities
- ❑ Indicators of effective collaboration across departments and across institutions
- ❑ Indicators of faculty and student satisfaction

10. Concerns and Recommendations

Based on the above information and the presentation of project staff, the RSV panel will summarize their concerns and will often propose a prescriptive list of action items or corrective measures. It is expected that the project staff will address the concerns of the RSV, or provide justification why not.

As with the merit-review process, discussion will include—

- ❑ The strengths of the project's intellectual merits
- ❑ The weaknesses of the project's intellectual merits
- ❑ The strengths of the project's broader impact
- ❑ The weaknesses of the project's broader impact

Of particular interest will be—

- ❑ The project's compliance to the proposed scope of work (or documentation/justification to the contrary)
- ❑ The project's compliance with the Cooperative Agreement (or documentation/justification to the contrary)
- ❑ The project's compliance with the goals of the program: a) to significantly increase the number of underrepresented minorities receiving doctoral degrees in STEM disciplines and b) to increase the number of underrepresented minorities recruited into the professoriate. AGEP goals are expected to be achieved through the establishment of alliances of doctoral-granting institutions building sustainable infrastructure to maintain the increased minority participation in STEM.