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Date: 5 November 2019

From: UNOLS Council Non-Operator Subcommittee (Dr. Tammi Richardson, Chair; Dr. Mark Brzezinski, Dr. Elisabeth Sikes)

To: NSF and ONR (hereafter 'the Agencies')

Subj: Response to document "CY 2020 U.S. Academic Research Fleet Operations Support Findings and Recommendations"

Ref: The above document (submitted to Dr. Craig Lee-UNOLS Chair, 26 July 2019)

The following comments from the UNOLS Council Non-operator Subcommittee are in response to the Agencies' positions, guidelines, and recommendations as detailed in the "CY 2020 U.S. Academic Research Fleet Operations Support Findings and Recommendations."

The UNOLS Council was also given an opportunity to review this response.

Overall, we recognize the many challenges that the Agencies faced in FY 2019 that may continue to 2020, including scheduling issues related to the mid-life refits of the *RVs Revelle* and *Atlantis*, the Continuing Resolution and shutdowns, and the potential decreases in a FY 2020 budget. We appreciate efforts to reduce stress on the operators and recognize the need to bring uniformity to the costing structure. We are encouraged by continuing efforts to modernize the Academic Research Fleet (ARF) and look forward to the selection of an operator for the RCRV #3.

Our comments focus on the Agency Positions, Decisions and Recommendations, and Guidelines.

### **Agency Positions**

Most agency positions are identical to those in the past and have been commented on in previous Non-Operator responses. In response to position 6, we are encouraged by the possible extension of the retirement date of the *R/V Marcus G. Langseth* to September 2021, especially as it takes in mind the training needs of Early Career Scientists.

### **Agency Decisions and Recommendations**

Recommendation 1 (identification of cost reduction strategies, leveraging of institutional resources) is a recurring theme and a continuing activity for ship operators.

Similarly, re: Recommendation 2, the UNOLS community is embracing the enhanced capabilities of the newest members of the ARF and we believe will plan for reduced berthing capacities as needed.

## **Agency Guidelines.**

Most of the guidelines listed are identical to those in previous years. For Guideline 8 (re: use of two ships instead of one Global class), we note that the added statement “Otherwise, larger programs will need to wait until the desired ship is available with minimal transit days” may or may not work depending on the need for specific timing of an operation. Also, it does not cover the situation where all assets of 2 Global class ships are required for one large program (e.g., NASA EXPORTS). Additionally, the greater stability of the global class vessels allows science operations to continue in higher sea states than is possible on the new regional class vessels.

## **Supporting Information and Findings**

It is satisfying to see a slight increase in the number of operating days in 2019 as compared to 2018 (Figure 1, UNOLS Fleet Utilization), but somewhat concerning to see a decline in both the number of requests and the number of science days requested (Figure 4). The UNOLS Council has tasked itself with understanding these trends in greater detail.