



Committee of Visitors (COV)

According to NSF policy, each program that awards grants and cooperative agreements must be reviewed once every three years by a Committee of Visitors (COV) comprised of qualified external experts. The Committee reviews program portfolio activities and assesses the quality and integrity of the review process and program management related to proposal funding decisions as well as providing comments on how the results of funded research contribute to the advancement of NSF's mission and goals.

<http://www.nsf.gov/od/iaa/activities/cov/covs.jsp#geo>

2014 Committee of Visitor's Report on the Integrative Programs Section of the Ocean Sciences Division of the Geoscience Directorate

Oceanographic Technical Services (OTS)

OTS2 Finding: Since 2011 the OTS budget has remained essentially flat at approximately \$13M per year. Increased personnel costs are straining this budget. It was noted that since 2010 OTS has supported 80 marine technicians, but that overall only 30-35% of technician time is spent at sea. This major under utilization of the technician groups needs to be addressed. Rising personnel costs in the face of static budget levels makes the OTS budget unsustainable and is a major concern of the COV.

OTS2 Recommendation: While shore-side maintenance and pre-cruise planning are important duties of marine technician groups, better balance needs to be attained between shore and seagoing activities. The Program Director, in part using the annual reviews, should monitor the budgetary seagoing technician expenditures relative to shore support. Initial investments in establishing a technician pool is viewed as a move in the right direction and the program is encouraged to move forward with their plans to develop a pool of technicians that will support the academic fleet. The OTS Program should also consider moving from five-year awards to cooperative agreements like the SO Program in order to achieve greater flexibility in funding marine technician groups. Efficiencies and savings from economies of scale should continue to be explored.