

This is a report of my activities as science adviser and representative on the NCAR Executive Committee. I wish to summarize the budget discussions and the role I have played over the past 3 months in these deliberations that have led to the recent staff actions. I have refrained from doing this earlier because of the confidential nature of the discussions at the EC level and the need to allow the process to play out before comment.

Summary of Activities

Through the months of November and December the primary activity of the EC was to gather information in order to give final budget instructions to the NCAR laboratories, divisions and programs. The primary mechanism for this information gathering is the Annual Budget Review (ABR) process. For this round of budget decisions each NCAR laboratory, division and institute was required to present their budget plans under 2 scenarios, -1% and -4%, expected to span the range of possibilities of the final budget numbers from NSF. All members of the EC were encouraged to attend every ABR. In total there were between 10 and 12 ABRs (depending on how one counts) and I attended all but one, RAL's, missing this one because I was at an NSA EC meeting. Note that since only a small amount of NSF base funds (~\$400K) is appropriated to RAL, being absent for this presentation was not a critical loss of information in the budget process. I felt it was imperative that I attend all other ABRs, however. In addition to ABRs, there were a few regular NCAR EC meetings during November and December and a one-day retreat. The primary topic of discussion during these regular meetings was the ABRs and the staff actions included therein the guidance being given by the NSF, and the manner in which the EC would proceed through the process, e.g. give final targets and approval of actions after the holidays.

After a hiatus for the holidays, the process of determining targets began in earnest. The week of January 3-7 was one of daily meetings discussing various approaches to the distribution of the budget but these were all centered around a scenario in which the science divisions would necessarily take the brunt of the reductions in staff. This was a foregone conclusion since the impact of even a flat budget would require RIFs in ESSL and in order to meet the EOL HIAPER agreement and holdover agreements in the NCAR director's office divisional budgets and the CISL and RAL budgets would need to be cut. The final scenario agreed upon at the January 10th EC meeting was the one presented by Annick, -4.6% to the science divisions. Only SERE's ASP program fared better than the science divisions as postdoctoral salaries were increased without impacting the number of postdocs. After the meeting on the 10th, the divisions were given their final budget targets with the target date for staff actions. Tim then went to work to try to improve the situation by bringing more money in and using available reserves, complementing Annick's use of ESSL reserves. Annick and I fought as hard as possible for the science budgets, given the constraints of a real -2% cut from NSF and the need to match funds for HIAPER. Through all the discussion the NSA representative was given a serious voice on the the EC and some votes were in fact taken and so my vote counted.