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# From the AMS Secretary

Each of the five AMS policy committees, which report to the AMS Council, has one face-to-face meeting annually. Two of them meet in the spring; three in the fall. This is a report on the meetings of the Committee on Meetings and Conferences, held in Chicago on April 6, 2002, and of the Committee on Science Policy, held in Washington, D.C., April 19–20, 2002.

## Committee on Meetings and Conferences

### Report of the Secretariat

The Secretariat, which met the preceding evening, recommended to the Committee on Meetings and Conferences (CoMC) that the ten-year no-repeat rule for Invited Addresses at sectional and national meetings be separated into two disjoint ten-year no-repeat rules, one for sectional meetings and one for national meetings. CoMC approved the recommendation.

### Report of the Subcommittee to Review Cosponsorship of Meetings and Conferences of Other Organizations and the Conference Program

As part of the review of AMS conferences, the subcommittee collected materials from the *Notices* and final conference reports turned in over the past five years. The subcommittee found that the AMS conference program is useful and should be continued and in particular found that the Summer Research Conferences (SRCs) have been quite successful in spite of the low number of proposals submitted. It also assesses cosponsored meetings and conferences as being valuable by allowing for interaction and dialogue across disciplines. They suggested that an explanation of cosponsorship be put on the cosponsored meetings Webpage.

In connection with these recommendations, CoMC took two actions:

- The committee unanimously approved a motion to encourage the SRC committee to consider varying the format of the SRCs, for example, having a two-week institute followed by a related one-week conference. The SRC committee and its advisory committee are also encouraged to actively solicit proposals.
- The committee recommended that while CoMC itself should not actively solicit cosponsorships, it should encourage others to do so. Information on how to propose a cosponsored meeting should be posted on the Web and should include a listing of AMS's expectations regarding cosponsored meetings.

### Future Reviews of Selected Activities

Upon the request of the AMS Short Course Committee, CoMC decided to add a review of the Short Courses at national meetings to its planned 2004 review of Special Lectures Series and Special Projects. In 2003 it will review sectional meetings.

### Report on the San Diego Focus Group

Hema Srinivasan, who moderated the 2002 CoMC Focus Group, reported that in response to the focus group question, Do you view meetings as a valuable part of your AMS membership?, the answer typically was yes and the values mentioned fell into three main categories

- Research exposure and stimulation
- Meeting new people and reunions with old friends
- Employment Center activities (at the national meeting only)

CoMC discussed various comments and suggestions that emerged during the focus group discussions.

### Special Session on Current Events in Mathematics

CoMC discussed a new type of Special Session, proposed by David Eisenbud, to be presented at the national meeting, which would feature 3 to 4 prominent mathematicians talking about recent significant new work of others in their fields, as in the Bourbaki model. The committee agreed to approve the proposed special session as an

experiment for the 2003 JMM only, with a review by CoMC next year.

### 2003 Joint Mathematics Meeting

CoMC intends to host another focus group at the Baltimore meeting, scheduled tentatively for Thursday, January 16, 2003, 7:00–9:00 a.m.

## AMS Committee on Science Policy

Since the Committee on Science Policy (CSP) traditionally meets while the appropriations process is gearing up in Washington, a large portion of its meetings are devoted to visits by congressional and administration insiders knowledgeable about the federal budget process. New this year were a visit from a representative of the National Institutes of Health and a Saturday session intended to get committee members involved in grass roots strategies for contacting their members of Congress. Several department chairs attended, in addition to science policy representatives from other mathematical organizations. For the first time, members of the Coalition for National Science Funding were invited to attend some of the briefings.

### Highlights of the Visits

**James Cassatt**, director of the Division of Cell Biology and Biophysics, National Institute of General Medical Sciences, talked to CSP about opportunities for mathematicians at the National Institutes of Health and outlined the many funding mechanisms available in addition to investigator-initiated grants.

**Jill Harper**, of the office of Congressman Rush Holt, and **Ashwin Vasavada**, from Congressman Vernon J. Ehlers's office, talked with CSP about their experiences working on Capitol Hill as AAAS Science Fellows. Both work for former scientists, which is not usual for the fellows. Both felt that members of Congress get bombarded with scientific advice, sometimes bolstering two totally opposite positions; the main source of unbiased information is still the National Academies of Science.

**James Turner**, chief counsel, Minority Staff, House Committee on Science, described how Congress gets scientific information. He provided CSP with background on the demise and possible revival of the Office of Technology Assessment and gave a crisp analysis of the prospects for science funding in the FY 2003 appropriations process.

**David Goldston**, chief of staff, Majority Staff, House Committee on Science, provided a majority view of legislation affecting science and offered a different opinion from James Turner's on the question of the Office of Technology Assessment by insisting that it had been abolished, not because of politics, but for budgetary reasons and suggesting that its revival currently is a dead issue.

**David Radzanowski**, NSF budget examiner, Office of Management and Budget, turned CSP's attention to the Bush administration's proposed investment criteria for research and development and its management agenda for allocating

resources, including a tentative "score card" which rated NSF as the only agency receiving a green (i.e., good) sticker. Three criteria are proposed for all R&D programs: (1) relevance (to presidential priorities, agency missions, fields of science and "customers"); (2) quality; and (3) performance (on schedule and cost effective). After finalizing the criteria, OMB will work with federal agencies to apply them. Amid general expressions of skepticism about the scheme, John Ewing noted that two types of evaluation were compounded in the plan—evaluation of the agencies and their management of their funds, and evaluation of the research funded—and Radzanowski not only acknowledged that this was the center of ongoing debate at OMB but also conjectured that the plan would be implemented quite differently at NSF compared to other agencies.

**Joel Widder**, professional staff, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on VA, HUD and Independent Agencies, noting that CSP had heard all the positive steps the authorizers were going to take, delivered a sobering lesson about the world of appropriations in which NSF lives (i.e., vying with VA and HUD, the two elephants in that particular world), as he went over the numbers in the president's FY 2003 budget request. When asked for advice on making the voices of the science community heard, he advised against counterproductive strategies such as the recent environmentalists' broadcast fax assault on the appropriations subcommittee's fax machines.

**Michael Stephens**, professional staff, House Appropriations Subcommittee on VA, HUD and Independent Agencies (Joel Widder's counterpart in the House) gave a more optimistic perspective on the House appropriations for FY 2003, noting that it is the job of appropriations staff to "build down" expectations. However, he agreed with Widder that if one examines the hard numbers in the president's budget, NSF is really getting a 3% increase, rather than the published 5%. The real question this year is how much better than the president's budget the Congress can go, because there is bipartisan and bicameral support for giving more. In particular, Stephens felt there was momentum on the appropriations committee for giving NSF a 7% increase. An emerging concern Stephens had noticed among members of his subcommittee is whether NSF's focus on priority areas comes at the expense of core scientific research.

**William Berry**, director, Basic Research, Department of Defense Research and Engineering, described how DoD decides how to invest science and technology money, of which its mission-oriented basic research budget amounts to less than 1% of the DoD total.

**Philippe Tondeur**, director of the Division of Mathematical Sciences, National Science Foundation, was happy to report that recent increases in the division's budget have been dramatic and that mathematics is now funded at a level comparable with other sciences. Tondeur spoke briefly of the NSF budget request for FY 2003. He encouraged the profession to look to NIH and also the Department of Energy as important funding sources and expressed concern that the Department of Defense research budget is incomparably smaller than it was twenty years ago.

Hyman Bass, AMS president, thanked Tondeur on behalf of AMS and CSP for his optimism and vision as DMS director, adding that the mathematical community owed Tondeur a great deal for his leadership.

### **Communicating with Congress**

The Saturday sessions were devoted to “nuts and bolts” CSP work. Led by CSP chair Jane Hawkins, who guided CSP members through the techniques of making effective contacts with their members of Congress, members discussed how to visit with members and their science staff and how to deliver their message. CSP members practiced making the argument for increased support for science using examples of the impact of their research and that of their colleagues, in the member’s home district.

### **AMS Washington Office**

Sam Rankin, director of the AMS Washington Office, outlined some recent events he had organized to bring mathematicians into congressional circles and described his work with other scientific societies to make the concerns of the scientific community much more visible on Capitol Hill.

### **2003 Joint Mathematics Meeting**

CSP chose a short-list of speakers for the government speaker slot, usually cosponsored with MAA, mentioned possible topics for the CSP panel slot for further email discussion within the full committee and after the meeting agreed on the topic of Homeland Security and Mathematics.