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**Before the
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
United States House of Representatives**

**on
Building a Safer Antarctic Research Environment
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Chairwoman Johnson, Ranking Member Lucas, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the invitation to appear before you today to discuss the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Sexual Assault/Harassment Prevention and Response Report that was developed for the U.S. Antarctic Program (USAP), NSF's response plans, and our broader efforts to combat harassment in all research settings. I am Dr. Karen Marrongelle, Chief Operating Officer at NSF.

NSF recognizes that to enable scientists, engineers, and students to work at the outermost frontiers of knowledge, the agency must be a role model for teamwork, fairness, and equity. Investing in science, technology, engineering, and education for the Nation's future necessitates a safe environment, free of any form of harassment, that fosters equal opportunity for all.

NSF will not tolerate harassment in any research setting. NSF has endeavored to eliminate sexual harassment within the science and engineering community by taking a proactive approach to promote inclusive, diverse workspaces through new actions and ongoing programs; strengthening our Title IX compliance program; and practicing transparency in our guidelines and actions.

In 2016, NSF co-funded, with agency partners, a National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) study: Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (Sexual Harassment in Academia | National Academies)¹ on the prevalence and impact of sexual harassment in science, engineering, and medical departments and programs. This study, which was issued in 2018, formed a foundation for further consideration of our policies while providing important information to science and engineering institutions and organizations. The recently enacted Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors (CHIPS) and Science Act requires NSF to undertake a follow-on study to examine the influence of sexual harassment in institutions

¹ <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/24994/sexual-harassment-of-women-climate-culture-and-consequences-in-academic>

of higher education on the career advancement of individuals in the STEM workforce and assess progress in implementing recommendations from the 2018 report. Efforts to do so are already underway.

After the NASEM report's release and recognizing that action was needed to combat harassment in the research enterprise, NSF issued an ["Important Notice"](#) to the U.S. research community with three components: (1) the issuance of a change in NSF award conditions to include a term and condition to combat all forms of harassment; (2) a statement on our expectations for harassment-free workplaces; and (3) the initiation of enhanced web resources for easy access to all NSF policies, resources, and communications for the community on harassment.

The term and condition for NSF awardees was issued in September 2018. This policy was developed specifically to address sexual and other forms of harassment and sexual assault within science, which was ultimately incorporated into the NSF 2019 Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide (NSF19-1). The term and condition require that any awardee must notify NSF of:

- (1) Any finding/determination regarding the PI or any co-PI [1] that demonstrates a violation of awardee policies or codes of conduct, statutes, regulations, or executive orders relating to sexual harassment, other forms of harassment, or sexual assault; and/or
- (2) If the PI or any co-PI is placed on administrative leave or if any administrative action has been imposed on the PI or any co-PI by the awardee relating to any finding/determination or an investigation of an alleged violation of awardee policies or codes of conduct, statutes, regulations, or executive orders relating to sexual harassment, other forms of harassment, or sexual assault.

NSF's Office of Equity and Civil Rights (OECR) is the cognizant office for coordinating NSF actions to ensure awardee compliance with Title IX and related award term and conditions and for addressing employee discrimination complaints, including compliance with the harassment term and condition. NSF has continued to refine its approach to enforcement as well, most recently the agency clarified its policy regarding what NSF employees should do if they become aware of incidents of sexual harassment on NSF awards or within the Agency itself to ensure that these policies have broad reach and provide ample protection for the NSF-funded community. In addition, effective January 2023, for each proposal that includes research off-campus or off site, the awardee must complete a certification that the organization has a plan in place that describes how harassment and other abusive or unwelcome behavior at that site will be addressed.

These actions are supplemented by other agency-wide policies and practices to combat harassment and encourage positive and healthy research environments. It is within this broader framework, and with a commitment to continuing to refine our approach and take new actions as needed, that we are approaching our response to the Sexual Assault/Harassment Prevention and Response Report (SAHPR) Report on the USAP program.

United States Antarctic Program (USAP)

Established at NSF in 1958, the USAP is funded and managed by NSF's Office of Polar Programs within the Directorate for Geosciences. The USAP supports scientific research, engages in environmental stewardship, and maintains a geopolitical presence in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean as mandated by [Presidential Memorandum 6646](#) and Presidential Decision Directive NSC-26.

Without interruption since 1956, Americans have been studying the Antarctic and its interactions with the rest of the planet and taking advantage of the unique atmosphere to study the cosmos. The program comprises competitively merit-reviewed research projects by scientists selected from institutions including research projects supported by other U.S. agencies. Logistics and facilities are supported via contractors as well as from agencies of the U.S. Government on a cost-reimbursable basis. The USAP community consists of almost 3,000 people who travel to the ice every year. This includes about 500 researchers and their team members; over 1,500 support personnel and contractors, and 1,000 federal staff from multiple agencies and defense and military personnel.

The research generally falls within three overarching goals: to understand the region and its ecosystems; to understand the linkages and effects of Antarctica with global processes such as climate; and to take advantage of the region as an advantageous platform to study the upper atmosphere and space.

Three Permanent U.S. Research Stations

The program has three permanent year-round research stations and two ice-capable research vessels. In the austral summer (the period of extensive sunlight and comparative warmth that lasts roughly October through February) additional field camps away from the stations are established for glaciologists, earth scientists, biologists, and others. The NSF is committed to safe work practices and safe work environments and USAP participants are required to put safety and environmental protection first while living and working in Antarctica.

McMurdo Station is the largest Antarctic station. Established in December 1955, McMurdo is the primary logistics hub of the USAP, with a harbor, landing strips on an ice shelf, and helicopter pads. Its approximately 85 buildings range in size from a small radio hut to large, three-story structures and include repair facilities, dormitories, administrative buildings, a firehouse, medical clinic, power plant, water distillation plant, wharf, stores, dining facilities, clubs, warehouses, and the Crary Science and Engineering Laboratory. Built on volcanic rock and permafrost at Hut Point Peninsula on Ross Island, McMurdo is located on the solid ground farthest south that is accessible by ship.

Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station stands at an elevation of 9,306 feet on Antarctica's nearly featureless ice plateau. The station, which is 850 nautical miles south of McMurdo Station, drifts with the ice sheet at about a rate of 10 meters (33 feet) each year. Astronomy, astrophysics, and atmospheric sciences are major research thrusts for South Pole Station. Americans have occupied the geographic South Pole continuously since November 1956.

Palmer Station is the smallest of the three permanent U.S. research stations. Palmer Station supports marine, terrestrial and atmospheric sciences research. Data collected in the coastal environment around Palmer Station contributes to a global network of sites dedicated to observing and improving scientific understanding of long-term ecological trends.

Research Field Sites

During some summer seasons, the USAP establishes and operates one or more major summer research camps in areas of scientific interest. Small research teams requiring temporary shelter use single- or

double-walled tents of several designs, both modern and traditional. Tent camps usually are placed or moved by helicopter or skimobile. Due to the harsh Antarctic environment safety is paramount in field sites. All tent camps and huts are required to have radios and satellite phones, and they maintain daily contact with the nearest station.

USAP is a Unique Research Environment

NSF is committed to being a leader in establishing agency-wide policies and requirements to help ensure research environments are free from sexual assault, sexual harassment, and other forms of harassment. NSF understands that the USAP operates in a unique research environment, with participants from a wide variety of institutions and backgrounds. Accordingly, in 2013, NSF developed the Polar Code of Conduct that addresses expectations for professional conduct and acceptable behavior by all USAP personnel. Every USAP participant is required to read, agree, and abide by this Code of Conduct and violations can result in removal from the continent.

In 2020, individuals expressed concerns related to harassment and assault within the USAP to NSF staff. In April 2021, NSF responded to the concerns voiced by USAP participants and [announced](#) the agency's intent to create a USAP-specific Sexual Assault/Harassment Prevention and Response (SAHPR) program to combat harassment and provide a safe community for all Antarctic deployers. NSF partnered with the Department of the Interior's [Federal Consulting Group \(FCG\)](#) and their contracted team of experts at Leading and Dynamic Services and Solutions (LDSS) Corporation, Alteristic, Inc., and the Victim Rights Law Center (VRLC) to conduct a needs assessment and propose an implementation plan.

The needs assessment was conducted in 2021 and included digital surveys of past and current deployers and a series of focus groups and individual interviews with contractors, researchers, and federal staff. The results of the needs assessment report were delivered to NSF in summer 2022 and includes a plan for implementation of a SAHPR program with supporting resources and training materials. NSF published the full report on the agency website² and immediately began implementing measures to address the findings and recommendations. Below is a summary of some of the findings and NSF actions taken to date. NSF will continue to update the research community, Congress and other stakeholders on the agency's ongoing response.

Needs Assessment Report and NSF Response

The results of the SAHPR Report are deeply troubling and demonstrate a fundamental need for cultural change as well as change in current practices. The report advised that sexual assault, sexual harassment, and stalking are problems in the USAP Community. It also found that the complex and unique nature of the multi-jurisdictional USAP (e.g., federal staff, military personnel, contractors and academic researchers) with varying policy enforcement mechanisms across USAP creates gaps that hinder current response and prevention efforts. It further stated that the current response systems are confusing and inadequate (due in large measure to the multi-jurisdictional aspects of the participants and lack of comprehensive policies to address them), and the fact that there is no single point of communicating concerns about sexual harassment and assault was noted as a particular challenge. Finally, the report also indicated that contractor employees have significant mistrust of the human resources departments of prime and sub-contractors, with some individuals feeling dismissed or shamed, and fearing retaliation.

² <https://www.nsf.gov/geo/opp/documents/USAP%20SAHPR%20Report.pdf>

Some employees also felt that perpetrators were not held accountable for their actions and continued to work in the program despite harm done to others.

Recommendations to address these concerns are multifaceted, and address both prevention and response. In general, the report found that senior leadership (which can be leaders of grantee research teams, senior contractor personnel who have supervisory duties, or others with high level positions) is committed to addressing sexual assault and harassment, but found that trust in, and the effectiveness of, the leadership response was low. Specifically, the report cited lack of awareness among leadership that sexual assault and sexual harassment are significant problems in many areas of the USAP. The report noted there are early indicators of initial progress toward creating a healthy climate but stated that infrastructure dedicated to prevention is nearly absent and effective prevention training and evaluation is lacking. The report further states that despite insufficient opportunities provided for the USAP community members to engage in prevention efforts, there is significant motivation to engage.

The report calls for the development of a communication strategy that includes a toolkit of prevention infrastructure, including prevention staff, training, and policies. It also advises the establishment of a prevention collaborative body. Increases in prevention education opportunities, including better training, such as “bystander intervention” and “know your rights” learning opportunities are also advised. These actions are intended to support a transition to a more positive culture and climate among all USAP participants.

Engagement of the Antarctic community and development of a robust response network also is critical. The report suggests: (a) increasing opportunities for community feedback and engagement and providing resources in Antarctica that support targets of harassment, such as a survivor advocate and ombudsperson; (b) working with contractors and other USAP partners to strengthen screening and hiring practices and handling of reports and complaints (c) establishing a Coordinated Community Response Team (CCRT) and (d) developing a more robust communication plan that describes resources available to targets of harassment. The report also calls for holding additional listening sessions in Antarctica to understand concerns and communicate plans and resources available to targets of harassment, emphasizing a positive climate and culture as keys to prevention, and restructuring policies, protocols, and oversight mechanisms.

Following receipt of the SAHPR Report, NSF leadership directed an agency-wide response to take the actions necessary to systematically address the findings, implement near-term solutions, evaluate long-term needs and actions, and most importantly, ensure the safety of all deployers and create a positive and collegial culture where research can thrive.

NSF’s program and contracting offices took swift contractual action to re-assess the terms of NSF’s Antarctic Support Contract (ASC). This action included the negotiation and implementation of new contract terms with Leidos (the ASC prime contractor), which built from a series of responsibility-focused communications with them and culminated in the issuance of a contract modification.

The modification was issued in September, with two distinct types of actions: (1) Reaffirmations of our expectations on existing contract clauses; and (2) New contract requirements. Some of the key provisions of the modification include:

- Reaffirming that it is the contractor's responsibility to prevent and detect criminal conduct and promote a culture that encourages ethical conduct, including due diligence regarding sexual assault and harassment. This includes appropriate and timely reporting to the extent possible under the contractor's due diligence procedures, and in accordance with new requirements established by NSF.
- Reminding them of their responsibility to provide adequate subcontractor oversight, including sharing all new NSF and ASC requirements on preventing and responding to incidents of sexual assault and harassment for all subcontractors that deploy personnel to Antarctica.
- The contractor and any of their subcontractors, as part of the pre-employment screening process for positions eligible for deployment to Antarctica, shall ask potential employees if they have been disciplined for incidents of sexual assault or sexual harassment, or quit before being disciplined for sexual assault or harassment within the past three years. Individuals shall not be eligible for deployment if they have been disciplined for sexual assault or sexual harassment within the past three years.
- The contractor will ensure that their or subcontractor personnel removed from the Antarctic for sexual assault or sexual harassment shall be prohibited from deployment to Antarctica for a period of three years from the date of their removal. The 3-year prohibition from Antarctic facilities is a contractual remedy and it represents an initial agreement with the vendor. NSF coordinates parallel criminal, civil, administrative and contractual remedies where appropriate, which may involve further assessment of matters such as the duration of any Antarctic deployment prohibition and/or pursuit of other remedies.
- Concurrent with this modification, NSF Director Panchanathan released a staff memorandum laying out immediate steps the agency will take to address reports of harassment, assault, and bullying in the USAP. The memorandum includes the following:
 - 1) Directs the NSF's Office of Equity and Civil Rights (OECR) to establish a SAHPR Support Office in order (i) to provide all the necessary resources including on-the-ground personnel in Antarctica, to support deployed personnel on matters relating to sexual assault and harassment, and (ii) to remove any or all barriers as well as provide an independent line of reporting for victims of sexual assault/harassment matters in the USAP.
 - 2) States that the SAHPR Program Office will be independent of the U.S. Antarctic Program and will be funded and managed directly by the Office of the Director.
 - 3) Enacts a multifaceted plan that targets prevention, uses up-to-date training methods, addresses the complexity of reporting incidents where multiple employers and agencies intersect, and works to create an environment which empowers deployers to speak up when they see or experience sexual assault or harassment and empowers management to take swift and appropriate action.

To operationalize the immediate goals of this memorandum, Director Panchanathan also established a SAHPR Task Force to coordinate and integrate the initial operational and strategic elements of NSF's response and action plan to combat sexual assault and harassment in the USAP. I chair the Task Force and report plans and progress towards implementation milestones to the Director on a weekly basis.

In this next section, I summarize the [NSF Action Plan](#) and the progress we have made to date.

1. **Single Communication Point at NSF for Sexual Assault/Harassment Matters**

NSF's Office of Equity and Civil Rights (OECR) will create a Sexual Assault/Harassment Prevention and Response (SAHPR) office to act as the single communication point for the USAP, and to properly refer all sexual assault/harassment matters. This single focal point will provide a safety net for ensuring access to resource materials, preventing miscommunication regarding reporting lines, and building trust in leadership and management structures. OECR will coordinate as appropriate with the Office of Polar Programs (OPP), Office of the General Counsel (OGC), and the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) for any criminal or administrative matters that require other action.

PROGRESS:

- The SAHPR Program office has been established in OECR. Staffing plans and recruitment of relevant experts are underway.
- Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) for appropriate coordination on reporting lines are under development. This includes building formal lines of communication with USAP partners (e.g., contractors, federal agencies, military partners, and academic institutions) to build best practices to support the multi-jurisdictional nature of USAP.
- OECR will provide resources and support to USAP but is also building a foundation to provide similar services for the broader NSF community.
- As the SAHPR support functions are being built, OECR will provide bridge services to all USAP partners and personnel for reporting and follow-up on all matters of harassment.

2. **Resources for Victims**

NSF's goal is to ensure a safe and productive environment for scientists, support personnel, and visitors who participate in USAP activities. NSF is providing immediate resources, including a point person in Antarctica to directly support deployed personnel for matters relating to sexual assault and harassment. The SAHPR program function is independent of OPP and is funded and managed directly by the Office of the Director.

PROGRESS:

- NSF has established a new 24/7 on-ice resource for deployed personnel:
 - Beginning on October 25, NSF deployed an on-ice advocate to Antarctica who is an independent, confidential resource with the necessary expertise to support all survivors of harassment, assault, or bullying behaviors. The on-ice advocate will be a continuous presence in Antarctica, through a series of rotational tours of multiple individuals. The on-ice advocate is accessible in-person but can also be reached by phone from the South Pole Station, Palmer Station, or field sites.
 - NSF is taking proactive efforts to publicize the availability of the on-ice resources through USAP publications, information materials posted throughout NSF's three stations, and through digital communication channels.
- NSF is continuing to provide 24/7 access to existing on-ice resources:

- A counselor is available 24/7 for all deployed personnel; this individual is in addition to the on-ice advocate for SAHPR.
- The USAP program has a permanent chaplain available for deployed personnel.
- A Special Deputy U.S. Marshal at McMurdo is available year-round to respond to any reports of assault or criminal activity.
- To supplement the new and continuing on-ice resources, NSF is in discussions with a leading contractor who has provided SAHPR crisis response, reporting, therapy, and other services to numerous federal agencies (including the Department of Defense and NOAA) and maintains a national public hotline for similar services. It is our intent to engage this contractor to provide additional 24/7 services to deployed personnel via other communication channels (telephone, text (SMS), online chat). These additional communication channels will ensure that deployed personnel have multiple avenues for support and assistance. The contractor may also assist NSF to document and implement robust reporting and follow-up procedures as part of OECR's SAHPR Program Office functions.
- The SAHPR Office Program functions (including the services above) are funded and managed under the direction of the Office of the Director. NSF has reallocated existing resources to fund the immediate effort for USAP.

3. **Antarctic Site Presence and Visits**

NSF Office of the Director (OD)/OECR leadership will deploy early in the operating season (late-October/early November) to Antarctica to oversee the installation of the deployed SAHPR Support Office function and to conduct listening sessions and meet one-on-one with personnel.

PROGRESS:

- The Deputy Office Head of OECR deployed to Antarctica in late October concurrently with the on-ice advocate, whose services are one of the components of the SAHPR Program Office functions. They were accompanied by senior NSF leadership from the Office of Polar Programs (OPP).
- NSF conducted seven (7) in-person listening sessions in McMurdo Station. Additional virtual sessions are being planned for December.
 - Sessions were facilitated by the on-ice advocate; OECR and OPP senior executives attended.
 - The purpose of the sessions was to receive the community's input on the SAHPR Report and to understand their needs.
 - Approximately 20-30 individuals attended each session.
- NSF took some immediate action to provide information resources to the community during and after the listening sessions:
 - Provided a resource for the on-ice advocate to share with survivors on legal remedies for reporting.
 - Provided an update for the community on progress on the NSF Action Plan.
 - The community expressed concerns about retaliation or reprisal for using SAHPR resources or reporting. OECR is developing an information resource for the community so that they may understand their rights.

4. **Increased Vetting**

NSF is improving existing background investigation procedures for all deploying personnel to ensure that all personnel pass a criminal background check and have not been disciplined by their employers.

PROGRESS:

- The new contract terms for the ASC require that any potential employees of NSF's prime contractor or their subcontractors be asked whether they have been disciplined for sexual assault or harassment by a previous employer or quit before such discipline took place within the past three years. These individuals are not eligible to be deployed to Antarctica. This timeframe was agreed upon as an initial measure to protect individuals in the Antarctic and the NSF's interests in maintaining a safe work site. It can be reviewed and revised as appropriate as NSF and the vendor get a better understanding of the potential impacts. Further, NSF reserves the right to pursue parallel remedies.
- Federal staff (NSF, other agency, military) go through federal clearance procedures.
- In addition to the employer-based screening that is conducted by the ASC prime contractor or their subcontractors, NSF now requires all contractor and subcontractor personnel to go through a vetting process similar to federal employees.
 - This includes a fingerprint check and clearance of the OF-306 (Suitability for Federal Employment).
 - Potential employees are required to submit this information directly to NSF for federal adjudication.
 - A small number of individuals who will be wintering in Antarctica (less than 20) needed to be deployed before the information could be collected. NSF is in the process of collecting and adjudicating this information; we expect to receive this information in December.
- Grantees and their teams are primarily employed by academic or other research institutions; they may be sponsored by NSF or our partner federal agencies. NSF will be developing a process to assess the vetting procedures at a small number of these institutions to recommend how best to ensure appropriate clearances for these individuals.

5. **Accountability**

Any entity with personnel deployed to Antarctica – federal agency, military, contractor, academic institution must provide a cognizant senior official outside the local/field unit to coordinate with OECR for immediate response to any reports of sexual assault or harassment.

PROGRESS:

- NSF has identified a list of USAP federal agency and military partners and have obtained points of contact for each of them.
- NSF already has well-established contacts through its contractual relationship with Leidos. Additionally, Kathleen Naeher, Chief Operating Officer of the Civil Group at Leidos and Chair of its Oversight Board, has been engaged with us.
- OECR will use its existing mechanisms with academic institutions to respond to any reports of sexual assault or harassment among our grantees in Antarctica.

- As OECR builds out new procedures for prevention, reporting and response, they will be using these contacts to ensure appropriate follow-up on any reports of sexual assault or harassment.

6. **Improved Training**

The deployment program for all personnel is being updated to include new and revised trainings on sexual harassment and assault prevention and response, including situations applicable to work at a remote field station. These updates include bystander and intervention training, as well as awareness and instructions on reporting and where to obtain support.

PROGRESS:

- All employers (federal, military, contractor and academic) of USAP personnel deployed in Antarctica provide employer-specific sexual assault and sexual harassment (SA/SH) training. NSF will be documenting these training requirements for future review/action.
- NSF's prime contractor has updated their internal training requirements.
- The prime contractor is also now required to conduct an annual review of all training offered by their subcontractors to ensure alignment with NSF and ASC requirements.
- NSF has required supplemental SA/SH training that is USAP-specific. This year, that training has been updated to address recommendations of the needs assessment report. The changes include implementation of bystander intervention training.
 - Since its implementation, 100% of individuals who are deployed to Antarctica are required to attend this in-person, interactive training prior to deployment.
 - NSF is in discussion with our military partners to ensure this is carried out for any deploying military personnel as well.
- Training will be followed-up throughout the season with reminders in newsletters, and other communications.
- The on-ice advocate is also developing bystander intervention training specific to certain types of personnel on the ice, for example, bartenders.
- There are large work centers in Antarctica (e.g., Supply, Parsons, Galley, and Fire Department). The on-ice advocate has developed SAHPR prevention talking points for work center managers to facilitate discussions with staff on prevention/bystander intervention.

7. **Enhanced Security Measures on the Ice**

Physical security measures are being implemented in Antarctica in response to comments in the SAHPR Report including, but not limited to: installation of additional peepholes in doors, improved key management and controls for master keys, and additional satellite communications options and protocols for deep field site personnel.

PROGRESS:

- Installation of peepholes in every lodging room at all of NSF's Antarctic Stations
 - 40% of McMurdo rooms have peepholes
 - Materials have been ordered for the other stations and are being expedited through the supply chain. Materials for McMurdo and South Pole have arrived in Auckland and are going through customs clearance. Upon completion, they will go to Christchurch, then

McMurdo and South Pole. Materials for Palmer Station (our smallest station) will transit through Punta Arenas.

- Installation will be a priority when the materials arrive. All installations will be completed this season.
- Improved key management and controls for master keys
 - All individuals with master key access (considered to have elevated privileges) have received full federal clearances.
 - A key machine is being sent to South Pole station, which will allow anyone to request a key so they can lock their doors when they leave (doors can currently only be locked from inside). This is already in place at McMurdo and Palmer.
- Provision of additional satellite communications and protocols for deep field teams
 - Each deep field team will receive 2 (not 1) satellite phones (which have text/email capability)
 - The ASC Field Safety lead discusses the SAHPR program and on-ice reporting procedures and resources with all deploying field teams.
 - Field teams are receiving a contact card on how to access SAHPR resources.

8. **Director's USAP Task Force on Sexual Assault/Harassment**

The NSF Director has established a Task Force on harassment in the USAP to immediately coordinate and integrate the operational and strategic elements of the agency response. The Task Force consists of NSF staff and will provide reports to the Director on a weekly basis.

PROGRESS:

- As the COO, I chair the SAHPR Task Force, which initially met on September 30 and has continued to meet weekly thereafter.
- The task force consists of senior executives representing these business units at NSF:
 - Office of the Director
 - Office of Equity and Civil Rights
 - Office of the General Counsel
 - Office of Legislative and Public Affairs
 - Office of Budget, Finance and Administration
 - Office of Information Resource Management
 - Directorate for Geosciences and the Office of Polar Programs
- Through the Task Force, I provide a weekly update to the Director on progress on the NSF Action Plan.

I would like to emphasize that these are immediate response plans, and NSF will be enacting additional efforts based on feedback from the just-concluded listening sessions. NSF will continue to revise and adjust our actions in the months and years ahead. We will also be conducting annual climate surveys as a method of helping us to understand if our actions are contributing to the culture shift we expect to see and will also help us identify anything we need to change. Finally, NSF will be approaching the National Academy of Public Administration to discern whether they will be able to conduct an independent review of the policies, procedures, and employment conditions in the USAP to determine whether structural

and/or operational changes should be made to the USAP to reduce the causes of sexual assault and harassment.

NSF is committed to making this a priority effort and will apply lessons learned from these activities across all NSF programs. Success of our actions, however, are incumbent upon our partners' (universities, contractors, other agencies) commitment to culture change within their organizations.

Conclusion

Madam Chairwoman, Ranking Member Lucas, thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you and the committee today to discuss these important issues.

NSF will continue to take steps to ensure that all research environments are free of harassment in any form and that research can thrive in collaborative, supportive, safe environments. NSF is committed to working with the entire USAP community to take the steps necessary to eliminate sexual assault and harassment at our Antarctic stations, vessels, and field camps, create supportive culture, and increase safety for all, and is working in strong partnership with leadership from across the military and the Antarctic Support Contractor, Leidos. A community effort is essential to eliminate sexual and other forms of harassment.

We appreciate the continued strong support of this Committee and look forward to working with you to advance research for the benefit of the nation.