Notes from NSF Hot Topics Discussion July 15, 2013

GRFP and NGRF:

- Professional development opportunities important to provide, including:
  - International research opportunities
  - Attention to career building tools (Students need to make a career, not take a job)
  - Industry and government opportunities, include museums and Smithsonian

- Explore ways to make funds support more students: reduce stipends and consider fewer years of support

- Programs to consult/partner with as we develop targeted opportunities:
  - Professional Schools
  - Professional Science Masters (PSM PLUS program)
  - NIH BEST Program: roadmap for providing professional development; explore the supplement mechanism (to GRFP institutions)
  - NSF I-CORPS and Partnerships with Innovation Program

- Factors to consider as we develop professional development opportunities:
  - How will NSF define experiential learning?
  - Identifying good internship opportunities is challenging and time-consuming – need staff to cultivate and identify appropriate internship hosts and arrangements
  - Spell out financial guidelines
  - Consider how we will support Fellows with families
  - Include co-funding requirement to show value to the industry/agency
  - Timing is problematic: Fellows in early years have more time but are less experienced and Fellows in later years have the appropriate experience but need to devote full time to research

IGERT and NRT:

- Don’t lose strengths of IGERT, especially interdisciplinary focus
- Professional development for students is centered within the graduate program (as opposed to professional experiences of individuals in internships)
- Transformative potential, across colleges and universities
- Encourage creativity; don’t silo the NRT to specific disciplines/directorates
- Support for the cohort model, large project over multiple years
- Consider reducing funding to support more trainees: reduce stipend of trainees (and Fellows); provide more grants
- Don’t restrict institutions to one submission (or, come up with a formula for the large institutions to allow more than one submission)
- NIH’s new BEST program – can NSF partner with NIH to take IGERT to next level?
General comments for NSF’s support for graduate students:

Research Assistantships:

- NSF needs to send a clear message to Sponsored Research Offices that RA support is important (offer a “carrot”); RAs are first items targeted for budget reductions
- RA funding model does not accommodate international research experiences for graduate students
- Offer fellowships in early years, and RAs in later years of graduate program

Other:

- Pay attention to postdocs: How does NSF define the outcome of a graduate education and why is a postdoc needed? The postdoc paradigm needs changing.
- How does diversity fit into research assistantships, traineeships, and fellowships?

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