

26/Apr/2016

The Co-Chairs of the 4 WCRP Core Projects met last night over dinner (along with two of the project office Directors), and we have a few items we wish to convey to the JSC. I was asked to present this on behalf of the group. One concern that we all shared was the lack of communication between the Co-Chairs and the JSC and Director during the interval between JSC meetings. This has left us feeling disconnected from the planning and decision-making of the WCRP as a whole. For example, it is unclear to us what our role is in decisions regarding new Grand Challenges. When the Grand Challenges were first implemented, the concept was that they were to build upon the capacity resident in the Core Projects and that they should foster collaboration and cooperation amongst the Core Projects (and the Working Groups). The addition of new Grand Challenges therefore has, in principle, both financial and capacity implications for the Core Projects, yet we don't seem to have a role in the decision process (or at least not one that is obvious to us). A second example is the outline for the new strategic planning document that we saw for the first time just prior to the meeting. In it, the Core Projects do not seem to have much visibility (nor for that matter does modelling or model development which underpin much of what the WCRP aspires to deliver). Our role in helping to shape the strategic plan is not at all clear to us. Although we appreciate the relative freedom to manage the core projects, we feel these are but two examples of a slow decline in the visibility and recognition of the Core Projects – a decline that is visible to us in the increased marginalization of the core projects in WCRP documents, presentations and plans, and the decreasing budget relative to other activities. We would like to point out that the Core Projects represent a commitment on the part of a large community of scientists who appreciate and identify with the Core Project activities, and that a large fraction of the overall WCRP budget is the generous national contributions to the Project offices, their staff, and their operation. These cannot be taken for granted.

We offer two things that we hope will be seen as positive steps. First, we have decided to organize regular teleconferences amongst the co-Chairs and Project Office Directors, likely on a quarterly basis. In addition to cross-attendance at SSG meetings, these teleconferences will allow us more opportunity to discuss common interests, opportunities, joint activities, etc. Organization of these calls will rotate amongst the Project Offices. Second, we would like to reaffirm our willingness to provide feedback and advice on WCRP science and management issues. The Co-Chairs (along with the Working Group Chairs) represent a committed group of volunteers that has a very broad range of scientific expertise and a wealth of experience both nationally and internationally. In addition, we serve as a conduit to a much broader community of climate scientists. Many of us have a longstanding involvement in the WCRP and a strong desire to see it succeed. So, we stand ready to provide timely and constructive input, if asked, as part of the overall WCRP management team.

Finally, I would just like to say that the co-Chairs have developed a very collegial relationship and that we plan to organize dinners like this at future JSC meetings. We found it very productive.

We would be happy to discuss these or any other issues with you during coffee or lunch.