

# **NCAR Non-NSF Proposal Review Panel (PRP) Report**

Albert Semtner  
2017 PRP Chair  
Naval Postgraduate School

**UCAR Annual Members Meeting**  
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# The Proposal Review Panel (and their term limits)

Becky Alexander, University of Washington (2020)

Kirk Maasch, University of Maine (2020)

David Parsons, University of Oklahoma (2017)

Albert Semtner (Chair), Naval Postgraduate School (2017)

Allison Steiner, University of Michigan (2018)

Jie Zhang, George Mason University (2017)

# Findings for FY16

The Panel discussed 50 proposals selected from the 95 non-NSF proposals exceeding \$300K. Their conclusion:

***“Based on the existing review criteria, the committee determined that that no proposals were deemed to be unfair competition for universities, yet several important issues are raised below.”*** (i.e., in subsequent slides)

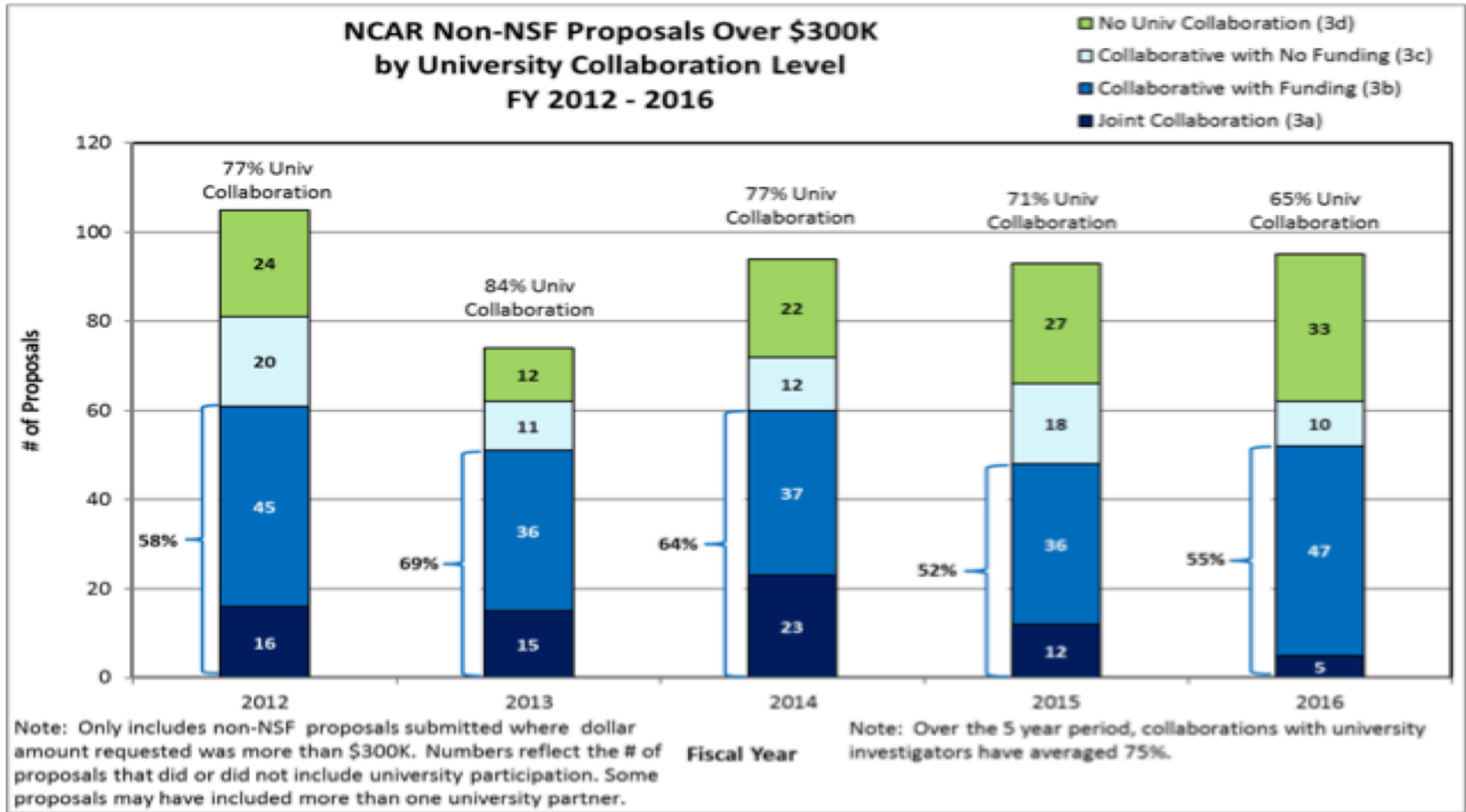
## Current review criteria:

- Pre-review by NCAR at the laboratory and directorate levels
- maximum 15% total co-sponsorship from NCAR’s NSF support
- maximum 15% NCAR NSF support for any FTE at NCAR
- no unfair use of models, data, high-performance computing, tools, and instrumentation.

(FY2016 average co-sponsorship was only 2.3% and FTE average was 1.1%)

**74% of total dollar value of \$83M was reviewed; and at least 50% of proposals from each laboratory were included.**

Distribution of proposals reviewed: RAL 18; HAO 8; MMM 6; ACOM 9; CGD 7; CISL 1; EOL 1.



# Issue 1 summary

**Support levels for non-NSF proposals:** The Panel felt that the 15% maximal levels for both the overall NCAR support and FTE support were working well in maintaining fairness. They also continued to feel that in exceptional circumstances these levels could be exceeded, provided the NCAR Director provides advance justification of an exception to the policy.

**Recommendation:** Continue the two 15% maximal support levels and the existing policy for any exception to those limits.

**NCAR response:** NCAR agrees with this recommendation. NCAR continues to anticipate that exceptions to the established co-sponsorship thresholds will be a rare occurrence.

## Issue 2 summary

**Collaborative funding:** The overall level of collaboration (65%) is the lowest in 7 years, and lower by 23% from 2010 and by 19% from 2013. We wish to continue monitoring future collaborative levels with bar graphs like the one above.

**Recommendation:** We encourage NCAR scientific staff to endeavor to increase both *funded* and *unfunded* university collaborations when appropriate.

**NCAR response:** In 2014, the review criteria were revised to more closely align to the requirements of the current UCAR-NSF CA. Non-collaborative proposals are thus allowed, as long as this criterion is met, and we already have a process to ensure all proposals contribute to the NCAR mission. This includes our responsibility to support, enhance and extend the capabilities of the broader research community.

# Issues 3 and 4 summary

**Large international projects and US state projects:** Some semi-sole-source proposals that are related to performing work in foreign countries or US states might be viewed as giving NCAR privileged access to funding. Increased collaborations with investigators in the University Community could lead to student involvement and provide sub-awards to more collaborators from the University Community.

**Recommendation:** NCAR, particularly RAL, should actively seek University collaboration in these semi-sole-source efforts that include *funded* university investigators.

**NCAR response:** RAL has increased efforts to engage the university community where feasible, including on foreign (and state) proposals. Overall, the university collaboration level on RAL non-NSF proposals over \$300K increased from 54% (19 of 35 proposals) in 2015 to 63% (24 of 38 proposals) in 2016. We fully agree that the involvement of students is an important component of our mission.

# Issue 5 summary

**The Research Applications Laboratory:** In some of its proposals RAL uses software such as DICast and GRAFS, which are licensed outside of NCAR and may be difficult for university researchers to obtain. Also, RAL proposals tend to be less collaborative and more business-like than proposals from the other laboratories.

**Recommendation:** If possible, NCAR should provide and advertise easier access to DICast and other licensed software developed by RAL. Additionally, NCAR should work to maintain the substantial scientific strength of RAL while bringing its mode of operation closer to the high standard of NCAR's scientific involvement with the University Community.

**NCAR response:** We will work with RAL to continue to seek collaborative opportunities. We will also work with RAL leadership on issues around easier access to licensed software. Previous external reviews of RAL have commented on the fact that RAL contributes to the university and operational communities and that RAL diligently makes its models and verification tools available to the broader community and facilitates their use through tutorials and numerous workshops. It should also be noted that many publications produced regarding the basic science behind the RAL products are an important contribution to the scientific community.



# Chair's Summary Remarks

- The PRP process is now well established for reviewing the fairness of NCAR's non-NSF proposals.
- The NCAR responses to the issues raised by the PRP have been exceedingly helpful in clarifying and answering them, and these issues may not need to be raised again.
- In particular, the activities of RAL have been shown to be of the highest scientific caliber and to be vital to NCAR and the University Community.
- In the future, RAL's applications methodology may serve as a model to enhance NCAR's non-NSF funding, as all NCAR Laboratories may seek more non-US government funding.