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NUFO: Industrial Workshop Report

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Monthly Operations Meeting

7/29/2009

About NUFO (National User Facility Organization)



- Represents 30 federally funded national user facilities
 - More than 30,000 users (scientists/engineers)
 - 560 universities in all 50 states; 400 foreign institutions
 - Approximately 7100 graduate students whose degrees will be based, at least in part, on research at NUFO facilities
 - 350 U.S.-based industrial firms/companies; 200 international firms
- Dual focus: advocacy for science and benchmarking best user practices
- Elected/appointed Steering Committee
- Annual Meetings: last one at Argonne on June 10-12, 2009; next year at BNL
- Outreach event planned: Washington DC on October 15, 2009

NUFO Web Site: <http://www.nufo.org>

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The FUTURE of America is the RESEARCH of TODAY



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The National User Facility Organization (NUFO) was founded in 1990 and currently represents the interests of all users who conduct research at U.S. national scientific user facilities, as well as scientists from U.S. universities, laboratories, and industry who use facilities outside the United States. NUFO facilitates communication among users, user organizations, facility administrators, and other stakeholders. Discussion topics include the benefits and significance of research conducted at user facilities, as well as their operational needs. NUFO seeks to provide a unified message at the national level on issues of resources for science, economic competitiveness, and education for the next-generation scientific workforce.

Mark your calendars: User Facility Exhibition will take place on October 15, 2009 at the Cannon Caucus Room, Washington, DC. More details available shortly.



NUFO meets at Argonne National Laboratory. The National User Facility Organization (NUFO) met at Argonne National Laboratory on June 10-12, 2009. Presentations from the meeting are now available.

Workshop on Industrial Participation at National User Facilities: June 11, 2009

- Purpose:
 - Examine issues surrounding industrial use of national user facilities
 - Recommend solutions to real or perceived barriers for industry
 - Provide a report to DOE/BES, other sponsors, facilities management with recommendations for action

- Participants: 111 individuals from DOE Program Offices, other sponsors, industrial firms, user facilities

- Five major issues identified

- Recommendations on each issue for sponsors, user facilities, NUFO

- Report requested by Dr. Harriet Kung, Director, BES – will be sent this week

Issue 1: Intellectual property agreements vary among user facilities in the United States and worldwide

- Despite DOE efforts to standardize user agreements across facilities, many variations still remain.
 - NIST and NSF-funded facilities also differ
 - US facilities often not competitive with foreign facilities
- Recommendations
 - For sponsors:
 - Survey industrial users about concerns; work with facilities to respond
 - For facilities
 - Examine institutional processes that delay access
 - For NUFO
 - Benchmark intellectual property practices of user facilities (both national and international) to determine if changes are needed to facilitate industrial access

Issue 2: There is limited awareness by industry of capabilities and access models for user facilities

- Recommendations
 - For facilities:
 - Develop outreach mechanisms to reach industrial users at relevant conferences
 - Identify an industrial liaison
 - Provide examples of industrial applications on facility Web pages
 - Improve promotional activities for small businesses
 - Enable easy access among multiple beamlines, instruments, facilities
 - For NUFO:
 - Identify and promote best practices
 - Identify key meetings, journals, organizations for outreach to industry
 - Specific industry-oriented Web page on NUFO site

Issue 3: It takes too long to access a user facility for a time-sensitive industrial experiment

- Recommendations
 - For sponsors:
 - Accept a variety of approaches to accommodate industrial access (potentially different review approaches or measures of success)
 - For facilities:
 - Develop a facility access model that accommodates industrial time frames (e.g., standing fast-track system)
 - For NUFO:
 - Benchmark facility proposal submission, review, allocation processes to identify best practices for facilitating industrial research within industry's time constraints

Issue 4: Industrial users typically need more assistance with proposals, experiments, data analysis

- Recommendations

- For sponsors:

- *Include metrics for facility reviews that recognize the value of industrial research*

- For facilities:

- *Include career advancement incentives for staff to assist industrial users (not necessarily peer-reviewed publications)*
 - *Develop Web-based tools*
 - *Analyze acceptance rates for industrial proposals to determine if rate is appropriate when compared with other categories of user proposals*

- For NUFO:

- *Include facility-developed information and software tools on NUFO Web site*

Issue 5: Facility-specific barriers inhibit the effective use of user facilities by industry

- Recommendations
 - For facilities:
 - *Charter an advisory committee with representatives from industrial institutions*
 - *Operate instruments and facilities for optimal performance and limited downtime*
 - *Include industrial representatives on facility review and advisory committees*
 - For NUFO:
 - *Identify, in collaboration with user groups, typical barriers and bring them to the attention of the facilities and users at large*
 - *Review progress at 2010 annual meeting*

Next Steps

- Send report this week to Dr. Harriet Kung, Director, DOE Office of Basic Energy Sciences
- Post report on NUFO Web site in August and notify
 - DOE program managers
 - Facility management
 - User Group Chairs
 - User Administrators