

## OPENING STATEMENT

Ranking Member Daniel Lipinski (D-IL)  
Subcommittee on Research & Technology  
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

*Is NSF Properly Managing Its Rotating Staff?*  
Joint Subcommittee Hearing

June 25, 2015

Thank you, Chairman Loudermilk and Chairwoman Comstock for holding this hearing on NSF's management of the IPA Rotator program. And good morning to Dr. Buckius and Ms. Lerner.

Reports issued by the NSF Inspector General over the last few years, including last Friday's report, make it clear that there are some management and oversight issues with the rotator program that are worthy of our concern and attention. However, as we pursue our oversight responsibilities, we should not lose sight of the tremendous value that the rotator program brings to NSF and to the scientific community.

NSF has a very talented workforce across the board. Long-term federal employees serving in program officer and executive positions come to the agency with many years of experience in scientific research as well as in managing program budgets and participating in the NSF grant review process. Those recruited to executive positions are also experienced managers. After several years at NSF, their institutional memory and knowledge of federal rules and regulations is invaluable.

Rotators also come to NSF with many years of experience and similar skills. What makes the rotator program unique and essential is that rotators provide a constant influx of new ideas, new perspectives, and a front-line understanding of emerging trends in science and engineering. As such, they are particularly well-placed to evaluate high-risk, high-reward research proposals and ensure that NSF continues to support a portfolio that includes transformative research, a topic we discuss often in this committee. While exploring options to strengthen management of the program and to implement cost controls, we should not – even unintentionally -- take any steps that compromise the benefits this program provides to the agency and to scientific progress.

Having said that, the Inspector General has raised several issues in the last few years that warrant our review. From the costs associated with the IPA program, to the management of benefits - such as Independent Research & Development, and requirements – such as ethics training, there is room for improvement.

The Foundation received the most recent report on a Conflict of Interest case only last Friday, giving them little time to review the specific recommendations. It might have been better, perhaps, to postpone this hearing by a couple of months. However, we are here today, and this particular case dates back to 2013, so I expect Dr. Buckius will be able to share with us some of his thinking about what went wrong in terms of management controls, and how procedures can

be tightened up going forward. I also hope that Dr. Buckius will be able to share with us actions NSF has taken since the 2012 and 2013 IG reports to strengthen management and oversight of other aspects of the rotator program.

I thank the witnesses for being here today and I look forward to their testimony.

I yield back.