

The Selection of Co-Chief Scientists

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INTRODUCTION

Under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding between the U.S. National Science Foundation and participating countries, responsibility for the selection of scientific participants for ODP legs rests with the Science Operator, ODP-TAMU.

The JOIDES Science Committee (SCICOM) recommends scientists for consideration by ODP-TAMU as Co-Chief Scientists. The names of these individuals are published in the SCICOM Minutes. At the meeting themselves, SCICOM is more explicit about its preferences, but good manners prevent the publications of a “pecking order”. After all, nothing would be achieved by gratuitously insulting the very people on whose enthusiasm and ability the program depends. The names put forward by SCICOM can be regarded as a shortlist of candidates for each leg. However, it is sometimes necessary for ODP-TAMU to add further names to the shortlist later, in order to maintain an appropriate international balance. The SCICOM members of the countries concerned are asked for advice on this, by SCICOM and by ODP-TAMU.

CRITERIA FOR CO-CHIEF SELECTION

The next step in the process of reducing the shortlist to the two Co-Chiefs required for each leg is to find out as much as possible about everyone on it. Curriculum vitae of most of the candidates will already be on file at ODP-TAMU. Referees will be asked, in confidence, for their views; members of the ODP-TAMU staff are consulted – some may have sailed with a candidate on an earlier leg. However, because of differences of language, culture, and means of communication between the various partner countries, it is impossible to get a uniform level of information about all candidates.

The qualifications of the candidates are then compared to a list of criteria which ODP-TAMU tries to satisfy. As a general rule, the criteria at the top of this list are more important than those lower down:

1. Where possible, a Co-Chief should be a proponent of the science of the leg for which he/she is selected.
2. The national balance identified in the MOU between NSF and the international partners needs to be observed. The MOU is not rigidly interpreted on a year-by-year basis, but is averaged over several years and the life of the program.
3. A Co-Chief must be an outstanding scientist in his/her field.
4. A Co-Chief must have the ability to lead an international team of 25-30 scientists.
5. At least one of the Co-Chiefs must be fluent in both written and spoken English.
6. The expertise of the two Co-Chiefs should be complementary.
7. New blood should be encouraged where possible.

Few people would disagree with the criteria listed above. Many of them have been in effect since the IPOD phase of the Deep Sea Drilling Project began in 1975. However, scientific ocean drilling has become a bigger, more complicated operation than it was a decade ago and these changes have complicated the process of Co-Chief selection. For example, the scientific and technical parties are now twice as large as they were on the *Glomar Challenger*. Laboratory instrumentation and computing systems are vastly more sophisticated on the *JOIDES Resolution*, and increase in complexity every year. ODP is in the throes of a shipboard data explosion. As a result of these changes, Co-Chief Scientists have both greater managerial responsibilities and a heavier editorial burden than was formerly the case.

Early in the program, ODP was criticized as being a “closed shop”, controlled by a clique of scientists from the days of DSDI. However misguided this criticism may have been, one of the ways in which the JOIDES SCICOM responded was to encourage new blood wherever possible – on JOIDES panels and working groups, and on the drillship. Hence the seventh criterion.

COMPLICATING FACTORS

1. Ever since it began, ODP has been gradually evolving. Two ways in which it has changed have a particular impact on Co-Chief selection:
 - a) It has become more international as time has gone by. Japan and the UK joined in 1985, the ESF consortium in 1986, and in 1991 the USSR became a full member. All participant countries have signed the same MOU with NSF, which will remain in force until the end of the present phase of the program at the end of September 1993. There are now 7 international partners, each expecting to be represented by Co-Chiefs.
 - b) Since 1989, there has on average been one engineering leg per year for which only one Co-Chief Scientist is appointed. The other Co-Chief on an engineering leg is an engineer from ODP-TAMU.
2. ODP has dropped its early regional orientation and become a thematically-driven program. Most legs now have several proponents; some are put together by a Detailed Planning Group from a number of separate proposals. A consequence of this is that being a successful proponent is not a guarantee that one will be invited to be a Co-Chief. The chances are that one proponent will be invited; more will be disappointed.
3. About 10% of the individuals invited to be Co-Chiefs decline the invitation. Their reasons for doing this are usually personal and cannot be discussed at an open forum like SCICOM. This puts an element of chance into the selection process and may, for example, result in two U.S. Co-Chiefs being appointed when the original intent was to have one U.S. and one international partner. The national balance would in that case have to be corrected later.

4. Selecting Co-Chiefs takes time, not because decision-making processes at ODP-TAMU are slow, but because some invitees need time before they can accept. For example, many invitees need to consult with their university administration or institution director in order to ensure that they have the time to take on the major commitment of being a Co-Chief. By inviting someone, ODP-TAMU is effectively saying that ODP wants 1-1/2 years of their time over the next three years. The fact that the vast majority of universities and research institutes regard this as an appropriate way for their employees to spend their time is evidence of the high regard in which ODP is held.

The time factor means that ODP-TAMU cannot work on Co-Chief invitations in series, waiting for Leg N to be settled before proceeding to Leg N+1. Rather, ODP-TAMU has to go out with invitations on two or three legs in parallel.

CONCLUSIONS

Being a Co-Chief Scientist in ODP is a position of great responsibility and prestige. It brings with it not just the opportunity to direct a major scientific project, but to influence the manning of that project as well. For most Co-Chief Scientists, it means more technical and human resources at their elbow than they have ever had before or will ever enjoy in the future. In some countries, it even opens the door to further personal or research grant funding.

Not surprisingly, therefore, there are many more scientists aspiring to the position than there are slots to offer them. Competition is intense. In an international program, however, it is important that this does not escalate into an unseemly public argument.

It is true that only very good scientists will be invited to be Co-Chief Scientists. The converse, however, is not true. It is not true that a candidate who is not selected is not a very good scientist. There are just far too many variables in the equation for that conclusion to be drawn. This fact should help unsuccessful candidates bear their disappointment with grace. Ultimately, what should motivate us all is the desire to see the science, which only ODP can do, being well and efficiently done.

Amendments