

Executive Summary of XSEDE Advisory Board Meeting, June 26, 2019

Meeting Date: June 26, 2019

Meeting Place: Teleconference via Skype

***Preface:** The main topic of this call was a debrief following the June NSF Panel Review. Agenda and meeting notes are available for XAB members at*

<https://confluence.xsede.org/display/XT/XAB+2019+June+Call>.

Summary of meeting comments and XAB suggestions

John thanked outgoing members Cliff Jacobs, Albert Lazzarini, and Karin Remington for their service on the XAB. There is an open call for new XAB members which has resulted in 19 nominations. Staff hopes to have the new members join us at the next meeting.

Recap of June NSF Panel Review:

John shared a recap of the June 2019 NSF Panel Review. The review went extremely well, and staff appreciates the XAB input that helped shape it. The Review report (sent to XAB members) was very positive, and the Panel expressed satisfaction with the value XSEDE is delivering to the community. The report included Opportunities for Improvement, and staff will compose responses for all of these. It is important to note that these are recommendations from the panel; not instructions. There are a couple that will not be implemented, and in those cases the response will provide a reason why.

One concerning comment from the Panel was that XSEDE is a project; not organization. In response to the Discover More brand campaign, the Panel stated that the Project should consult with NSF re. promoting XSEDE vs. promoting national cyberinfrastructure. Project staff found this concerning as it is XSEDE's mission to provide information about the project to new communities/individuals. One of XSEDE's strategic goals is to raise awareness of advanced research computing in support of science. This has been a goal all along. This comment conflicts directly with responses from prior review panels who stated that project staff is not promoting XSEDE sufficiently. The NSF program officer emphasized that the panel wanted to make sure whatever the project is doing is done in consultation with NSF. We consult with NSF regularly and will respond to indicate that we have consulted with NSF. The board noted that staff should inform the Program Officer that we are doing this, and if he wants more input from project staff, he needs to state what the project can do to help NSF.

The project has internally proposed longitudinal studies, but there currently is not adequate funding to do them all. These studies would look at topics such as: Where have students gone after they got a degree; How has training impacted them; How has this brought benefit to workforce development, etc. Some studies would need to be completed as an extension because full data would not be available until after XSEDE 2.0. This would not impact how the project is executed; however, they represent an understanding about the community that is more broadly applicable and that could impact a follow-on award. There is some concern about the project engaging in something that cannot be completed by the end of the project, as we need to make sure any expenditures have a clear & direct benefit on the delivery of services to the community. The Panel did not see this as an appropriate investment for the project to make. Staff will disagree in its response and explain the benefit to the community and follow-on activities. The project has developed a 10-year data set that has not been available previously to understand some of these issues. To not leverage that to better understand the impact of these activities on the community seems like a significant loss. There was discussion about possibly requesting supplement, but at this point the Program Officer has said he is not ready to respond to this. When negotiating the current

award, the project was given verbal guidance that requests for supplemental awards would not be considered, but there is not written documentation of this. The project has a new program officer now who may have a different opinion, but the project does not want to commit time developing this if it will not be considered.

It was suggested that the project should take the opportunity when talking to NSF to compliment them about what they have invested in, their foresight in creating XSEDE, their execution of XSEDE, and it has helped the community. John noted that he will see Manish Parashar & Jim Perosa in the next couple days and will express this and ask a few other questions in hopes of getting better guidance. The board noted that NSF expect agents to advance their mission and noted that XSEDE is one of their agents.

Staff discussed with the Review Panel the Staff Climate Study and related professional development ideas that have been discussed, which include requests not just for technical training but for management and leadership training. The Panel responded that such investments should have a clear and direct impact on the project's ability to serve the community. ECSS has backed off on the KPI target for number of projects completed in ECSS in order to provide time for staff to participate in training, which is a direct connection that is easy to see. The Panel felt that management and leadership training does not provide "direct impact on the project's ability to serve the community" so should be provided by staff members' home institutions. Not all institutions are doing this, however, so the project plans to defend this in its response. The board noted that XSEDE should develop leadership for the community, and the idea that XSEDE can complement and enhance home institutions' efforts was part of original plan. If home institutions were able to provide everything, the community would not need XSEDE. XSEDE can do this very well as it is the essence of what CI is about: people not hardware. It was also noted that most XSEDE staff are partially funded and have other responsibilities at their home institutions. There should be a balance of who is responsible for professional development. While it is important to build a national community of leaders, this is a shared responsibility and not solely XSEDE's responsibility.

John noted that text was added to the report response to state that people are XSEDE's most important asset. Skills have to be developed that are rare and difficult to retain. The project needs the appropriate workforce to provide the function that XSEDE provides.

John noted that this panel was one of the more thoughtful panels the project has had in a while. He appreciated that they dove deeper into several topics and considered how this fits into the broader picture. Staff will be developing responses to the report over the next week.