

**Joint EEO Advisory Committee Statement
June 2, 2004**

The Joint Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Advisory Committee is composed of the following five authorized committees: Advisory Committee for African Americans (ACAA); Asian Pacific American Advisory Committee (APAAC); Committee on Age Discrimination (CAD); Federal Women's Program Advisory Committee (FWPAC); and Hispanic Employment Program Advisory Committee (HEPAC). The EEO Committees work in concert with the Office of Small Business and Civil Rights (SBCR) to contribute to the agency goal of creating "a work environment that provides opportunity for all employees to optimally use their diverse talents in support of NRC's mission and goals." The EEO Advisory Committees contribute to achieving this goal by providing advice and recommendations to the Director, SBCR regarding factors that may impact policies, procedures, and practices related to the selection, promotion, placement, training, upgrading, and career development of NRC employees or selection of applicants for employment.

This Joint Statement represents the interests, concerns and recommendations of each individual group and emphasizes areas where our concerns overlap. NRC has made significant advancements but many challenges remain. The agency has demonstrated commitment to Equal Employment Opportunity and managing diversity in the following areas.

The agency committed itself to promoting a discrimination-free work environment and practicing EEO and diversity management principles when making recruitment, staffing, and placement decisions based on merit. Much progress has been made, especially in the area of minority recruitment for entry level positions at the grade levels GG-5 thru GG-12. The EEO Advisory Committees are working diligently with SBCR to ensure that the agency realizes its goals.

NRC continues to support diversity in career development activities such as demonstrated in the current Leadership Potential Program Class of 2004. This class is composed of 44% minorities, 36% white males and 20% white females. The agency has diversified its corps of first-line supervisors. It is our hope that this will continue, and be extended into the senior management ranks. The upcoming SES Development Program provides an excellent opportunity for the NRC to continue to demonstrate its commitment to diversity.

NRC offers several family friendly programs to allow employees to balance between the demands of work and personal lives such as day care services, fitness center, flexible work place, and adjustable work schedules. These programs create a supportive environment for employees and have a positive impact on morale, productivity, retention, and promotion of a healthier workforce.

However, other challenges remain:

1) The primary challenge facing the agency is the limited number of qualified minority applicants in feeder groups for management positions. For example, the last SES Candidate Development Class was 86% white, with white men constituting 59% and white women 27%. The scarcity of minority men and women in the feeder group, especially Asians and Hispanics is troubling. Unfortunately, the recent success in hiring minority entry-level employees will not

begin to address this inequity and imbalance for years to come. Consequently, other strategies, such as recruitment of experienced personnel from outside the NRC and active employee development, must be emphasized to address the historical under-representation of minorities in feeder groups.

Additionally, challenges remain with respect to active employee development and improvement in the work culture. All EEO groups identified career development for technical and administrative employees as a major concern. The perceived obstacles to career development include factors such as discrimination in quality of work assignments, the lack of mentorship, limited exposure to senior management, and exclusion from informal networks resulting in professional isolation.

The career development effort should stress the mentoring relationship between senior managers and minority staff. It is well established that good advice, sound guidance, coaching and inspiration are keys to success at the NRC. Unfortunately, many minority employees lack such a positive and enriching relationship with senior managers.

We understand that recruitment of experienced personnel is often dictated by financial concerns that may limit management's decision to have an immediate impact on career advancement. However, active employee development is a remedy that can be implemented immediately.

2) Administrative employees, in the regions and at headquarters, perceive that their contribution to the success of the agency's mission is marginalized. Without question, the NRC is a technical agency. However, approximately 30% of the NRC workforce is comprised of administrative staff. This portion of the workforce is overwhelmingly female and contains a high percentage of African-Americans. Unnecessary limits on opportunities for administrative personnel to improve their skills hinders the progression of the agency, creates acrimony in the workplace, and prevents the agency from enjoying the full potential of a large percentage of its staff.

3) In the December 2003 EEO Briefing, the Joint EEO Advisory Committee raised the issue of correlation between performance appraisal ratings and age. A study was conducted by Dr. Dan Lurie, NRC statistician, and the results confirmed that (1) older non-supervisory engineers and scientists received lower performance appraisal ratings than their younger colleagues and (2) as some employees got older their performance ratings decreased. The cause for any of the findings cannot be determined from the study. The analysis performed by CAD suggested that the performance appraisal ratings of older engineers and scientists were about twice as likely to decline as those of younger staff. There is a concern that declining performance of some older scientists and engineers may represent ineffective and inefficient utilization of critical staff resources.

To address the issues stated, we recommend the following actions.

A. Make management accountable for the development of all employees. Managers should consider all employees equally when assigning work to ensure that all groups are provided an equal opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities to receive and perform tasks of increased complexity and responsibility. Consider diversity when identifying highly qualified candidates to senior positions.

B. Make a commitment to better support the developmental needs of administrative employees with both internal and external training.

C. Involve senior staff in the important work of the agency and utilize them as mentors to transfer valuable knowledge, skills, and experience. Advise and remind supervisors that only work related issues may be considered in evaluating staff performance i.e., age is not to be considered as a factor. Provide age data on the Leadership Potential Program for both applicants and selectees; and initiate collection of age data for job applicants, especially applicants for promotion. Conduct an independent study to ascertain the reasons for lower performance appraisal ratings for older (50 years of age or older) non-supervisory scientists and engineers.

In conclusion, the EEO committees are heartened by the efforts made by the agency thus far, and have every confidence that progress will continue. We challenge the agency to continue its exemplary effort in diversity and offer our assistance in any way possible to help the NRC achieve its safety mission and reach its diversity goals.