

## Letter from USSSP Director

8 October 2021

Dear Colleagues,

We are entering a period of both challenge and opportunity in scientific ocean drilling. Although the pandemic has not yet fully relaxed its grip, the resumption of onboard participation by U.S. scientists and our international colleagues on the JOIDES Resolution has been a heartening development. The recent conclusion of Expedition 396 (Mid-Norwegian Continental Margin Magmatism) after eight weeks of successful coring and logging is cause for celebration and an extraordinary testament to the efforts of the JRSO and the resilience of the IODP community. The JR will take a break from IODP activity for the next two months, but we now expect that by the time that Expedition 391 (Walvis Ridge Hotspot) leaves port in early December, we will finally return to sailing the full complement of science party members.

I would now like to take this opportunity to update you on several other developments of interest to the community.

### AGU

As you know, we have traditionally enjoyed a live IODP Town Hall event at the Fall AGU Meeting. This is an opportunity to celebrate the year's achievements, look ahead to upcoming drilling campaigns, and network with colleagues. With AGU going virtual in 2020, we were obviously unable to hold an in-person Town Hall last year, and it pains me to report that we are also unable to do so this year. The combination of travel challenges for international colleagues, reduced domestic attendance, and safety issues associated with an offsite in-person event will make a live Town Hall both cost-inefficient and unsafe, and after consultations with NSF we have reluctantly concluded that the expense and risks outweigh the benefits.

If you do plan on attending AGU this year, please make a point of visiting the IODP/USSSP booth (#1028) in the Exhibit Hall to catch up on the latest community developments and rub shoulders with your IODP colleagues!

### UN Ocean Decade

The United Nations has proclaimed a Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, to be held from 2021 to 2030. Within the United States, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) are spearheading this effort. Scientific ocean drilling is prominently featured on several fronts of the initiative. First, the U.S. Science Support Program has been designated a UN Decade "Nexus organization," which raises the profile of ocean drilling in the broader ocean sciences community. In addition, NSF has successfully secured endorsement of IODP as a "transformative Decade Action." This is a highly competitive process, with selections based on applicants' "focus on solutions and ability to accelerate the generation and uptake of ocean knowledge for sustainable development; for their use of innovative technology; for their transdisciplinary efforts to co-design solutions between scientists and users of ocean knowledge; and for their respect of inclusivity, empowering women, early-career professionals and indigenous knowledge holders across their activities." And finally, USAC and USSSP have submitted a

successful Ocean Decade proposal for an “Ocean Shot concept” that focuses on the procurement of a state of the art, globally ranging drilling vessel in support of future scientific ocean drilling. Inclusion of this Ocean-Shot in the NASEM online Ocean-Shot directory will stimulate opportunities for further development of concepts, facilitate networking with potential collaborators, and promote matchmaking with potential funders. Ocean shots are welcomed and accepted on a rolling basis by NASEM, and linkages between concepts are encouraged, so please consider proposing additional ocean shot concepts that complement and build on the existing submission!

#### Toward a New Drillship

Continuing on the theme of a successor vessel to the JR, I would now like to elaborate on the exciting information that new USAC Chair Becky Robinson shared in her recent letter to the community. Several weeks ago, NSF reached out to USSSP to issue a formal “Request for Assistance on Behalf of the U.S. Science Community in the Determination of New Drillship Science Mission Requirements.” NSF requested that these Science Mission Requirements (SMRs) include the determination of scientific ocean drilling objectives and initiatives that are key to the U.S. community, as well as prioritization of regions of operations and vessel characteristics. In order to address this request, USSSP and USAC are in the process of populating a steering committee, to be chaired by Becky and Brandon Dugan, that will guide this effort. As Becky described, the process of defining the SMRs will involve several components, including a detailed community survey over the winter; a large community workshop to be held next spring (possibly preceded by one or more online community meetings); and an extensive and open online review stage once the draft SMR recommendations are developed. I cannot stress enough the importance of your participation at all stages of this effort. This is an extraordinary opportunity for our community, but some difficult choices will have to be made, as no single (affordable) drilling vessel can address all of the exciting science advanced in the 2050 Science Framework. Every voice in our community needs to be heard in order to determine SMRs that will optimize the overall scientific yield of a new vessel over the next several decades at a realistic cost.

#### Online Community Town Hall

With so many exciting developments in the pipeline, and particularly in light of the absence of an IODP Town Hall at AGU this year, we would like to convene a second online Community Town Hall in early November. This will be an opportunity for you to hear more about the SMR process, the conclusion of IODP, and, we all hope, the beginning of a successful transition to a next chapter in the annals of scientific ocean drilling. Both submitted and live questions will be welcomed. Please keep your eyes peeled for an announcement of this event.

Sincerely,

Carl Brenner  
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