

Letter from the U.S. Advisory Committee for Scientific Ocean Drilling (USAC)

23 September 2021

Dear Colleagues,

After too long, we are finally back to collecting cores with scientists on board the JOIDES Resolution in the North Atlantic, thanks to the tireless efforts of the JRSO, JR crew and support staff, USSSP, and the community at large. We are deeply saddened by the loss of JR catering crew member, Roy, and offer our condolences to his family, friends, and co-workers.

As incoming USAC Chair beginning on October 1, I am looking forward to the opportunity to work and grow with the ocean drilling community in this time of transition. I have been collaborating with outgoing USAC Chair Marta Torres, USSSP, USAC, and other community members over the last several months in support of present and future scientific ocean drilling goals. Drilling has resumed, first with a land-based science-party during Expedition 395C (Reykjanes Mantle Convection and Climate) and now with scientists on-board the JOIDES Resolution for Expedition 396 (Mid-Norwegian Continental Margin Magmatism). [The core images look fantastic.](#)

Last year, USAC assembled an Education and Outreach Workshop Steering Committee, which teamed with SERC (Science Education Resource Center) this summer to host three virtual [IMPACT Workshops](#) for broadening the impact of scientific ocean drilling (“Engaging the Public,” “Informing Policymakers,” and “Preparing the Next Generation”). All were well attended and highly effective. An in-person follow up workshop is in the planning stages, so please keep an eye out for the announcement. The USAC Legacy Data Working Group, tasked with generating new strategies to use existing cores and data, is assembling a steering committee to organize a workshop focused on community needs and opportunities around legacy data. This USAC working group will coordinate their efforts with a new JRFB working group that will explore the potential for developing virtual expeditions that could occur in any new phase of scientific ocean drilling, maximizing the use of these valuable resources in the years to come.

Following the release of the 2050 Science Framework, acquisition of a new U.S.-based drilling vessel has become a top priority. Planning around this goal occurs on several fronts. The JRFB has issued a [Request for Information](#) around implementing the Framework that remains open for input. USSSP is in the process of assembling a steering committee in response to NSF’s recent request for assistance in determining Science Mission Requirements (SMR) for a new drilling vessel. The SMR steering committee, which will be co-chaired by Brandon Dugan and myself, will survey the community for input regarding U.S. science priorities, convene a workshop to synthesize these priorities, and translate them into a set of recommended mission requirements that can be reported out to NSF. At the same time, a USAC Facility Business Model Working Group is exploring financially viable models for operating a new drillship and a

USAC Communications Working Group is working towards coordinated public communication of our needs.

USAC and USSSP want to keep the community informed on all developments. The second virtual Community Town Hall was postponed several times as NSF leadership held internal discussions on pathways for the potential acquisition of a drilling vessel. Now that the directive from NSF to determine the SMR is clear, we hope to convene a Community Town Hall in late October, after the IODP Forum meeting. USSSP will continue to communicate digitally with the community, providing details about current activities and future events.

I want to thank Marta Torres for her leadership during this transition period over the last two years. I look forward to the challenges ahead, and will work with USSSP, USAC, and the community to continue generating high quality ocean drilling-based science, grow the community, and share knowledge broadly while also planning for the future of scientific ocean drilling.

Sincerely,

Rebecca S. Robinson

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Incoming Chair, U.S. Advisory Committee for Scientific Ocean Drilling