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FROM: RTC Review Committee
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SUBJECT: RTC Review Report

The RTC Review Committee conducted a thorough, extensive review of the Romberg Tiburon Center for Environmental Studies. After examining the Ten-Year Report prepared by Director Alissa Arp, the Committee prepared a set of questions asking her to clarify several issues not addressed by her report. The Committee visited RTC twice, spending more than 14 hours at the site. We toured the physical facilities and interviewed the Director, members of the RTC Board, tenured/tenure-track faculty, research scientists, students, technical and maintenance staff and administrative staff. We met with groups of personnel and with individuals requesting a meeting.

Over the course of our review, the committee members developed a very favorable impression of RTC as an institution. We are impressed with the quality of the scientific research and research training of students at RTC. We found the faculty, research scientists, students and staff to be enthusiastic about and highly committed to the research and educational mission of RTC. We are also impressed with the many accomplishments of Dr. Arp during her ten-year tenure as director. We base the following recommendations on the materials submitted to us, our own observations and the very forthright input we received during our interviews.

1. Recommendation: Improve Infrastructure and Expand Research Physical Facilities

Infrastructure problems are hindering research progress and creating morale problems at RTC. For example, dust, ants, mold, water leaks, power outages and floods in laboratories are recurring problems and significant sources of frustration for researchers. Facilities staff is inadequate to address these issues in a timely manner, further impeding the ability of investigators to meet research commitments on grants. One or two additional facilities staff members are needed. Another pressing infrastructure issue with detrimental impact on morale is the absence of a wharf with a floating dock system to dock research vessels; this poses access and safety issues, making it dangerous to launch boats. Finally, the absence of five structural beams in building 36 and the absence of a retaining wall to prevent slides and floods have safety implications and place much of the research infrastructure at risk.

The addition of tenured/tenure-track faculty and research scientists for future expansion of the research operation requires additional research facilities. This growth would require a substantial capital investment to renovate existing buildings and/or construct new buildings. However, many of the existing buildings are old, deteriorated and potentially hazardous, since they contain asbestos and lead paint. We strongly recommend that SFSU invest in an Engineering Report evaluating the status of the existing buildings at RTC, and identifying and prioritizing necessary infrastructure improvements. As soon as the property is fully owned by SFSU, it should be made a priority in applications for Capital Outlay Funding from the CSU. Health and safety issues such as those mentioned above, in light of RTC's value to the CSU as a whole, should give capital expenditures there top priority. A thorough engineering report would also be vital in long range master plan development and in efforts to secure private funding for infrastructure improvements.

2. Recommendation: Develop Long-range Plans

The RTC Ten-Year Report states that the "Center's mission is to perform basic scientific research and educate and train the next generation of scientists." It further mentions that "scientists at RTC strive to provide an interdisciplinary understanding of complex marine and estuarine environments by pursuing research focused on questions regarding fundamental marine issues, train the next generation of scientists, and provide knowledge that allows informed environmental decision-making and stewardship." The broad scope and vagueness of this mission make it

difficult for RTC to establish a clear identity and to focus its limited resources to achieve significant scientific goals. A clearer mission statement is needed as a foundation for planning future growth and development.

There is a strong need for a long-range master plan to define the mission of RTC and provide a guide for its future growth and development. This master plan needs to address several substantive issues. Should RTC's research mission place heavier emphasis on specific areas of marine and environmental sciences? Should a major portion of its research be regionally focused, for example, on the Bay and on other regional estuarine and coastal marine environments? How much coordination and interconnectedness should there be among the research projects housed at RTC, and if more coordination is needed, how can this best be fostered? What is the desired balance between research and teaching at RTC? How can RTC faculty and research scientists establish closer connections with the SFSU campus?

The long-range master plan should clearly articulate a hiring plan for faculty/research scientists in specific scientific areas consistent with the mission. This plan should identify human and physical resources needed to support this planned growth, including additional laboratories, office space, other physical facilities (such as a pier with a floating dock), technical support staff and other support needs such as equipment. The long-range master plan should also include a physical facilities development plan, which identifies and prioritizes remodeling of existing buildings and construction of new buildings; this should be based upon a thorough assessment of the status of existing buildings, as discussed above. An important component of this master plan is a well thought through business plan that identifies costs associated with planned growth and projects increases in grant and other revenue as well as significant scientific goals that will be achieved as a result of this growth.

3. Recommendation: Change Organizational Structure

Currently all of the administrative staff report directly to the Director, and the Director devotes more than 95% of her time to day-to-day operations. This leaves insufficient time for the Director to focus on scientific leadership responsibilities such as local and national relations, advancement and research activities. Clearly the organizational structure and responsibilities of the Director need to be changed to attract a high profile scientist to the director position. A key recommendation is the addition of a Director of Operations reporting to the Director. This position's responsibilities should include supervising the staff, overseeing the physical plant and its day-to-day operations and participating in the long-range facilities planning. An

Associate Director would also be a good, but less essential, addition. The responsibilities of this position could include overseeing the curriculum and RTP process.

4. Recommendation: Expand the Role of the Board

The primary function of the board at the present time is fund raising; one member of the board, a civil engineer, also provides invaluable direct service overseeing the remodeling of building 36. A revitalized, more involved board with an expanded mission would benefit RTC. In addition to fund raising, an important role of the board should be community relations to enhance the visibility of RTC. The board would be more knowledgeable about the scientific work and achievements of RTC scientists if there were more opportunities for interaction with them. One way to achieve this would be to recruit scientists and academics as members of the Board, particularly marine researchers from other stations and campuses (e.g., UC Davis, UC Santa Cruz, Moss Landing). A more scientifically-oriented Board would be able to provide even more valuable collaboration with the Advancement Office in raising money and other resources for RTC.

5. Recommendation: Increase the Visibility of RTC

RTC is the only academic research facility on San Francisco Bay, and individual RTC scientists have established reputations in their areas of specialization. However, RTC is not well known as an institution, even at SFSU, in Marin County or in the local scientific community. More effort needs to be devoted to defining RTC's image and promoting that image at SFSU, other universities, marine stations and in the community. Promotional opportunities to enhance RTC's image would include offering board membership to prominent local scientists, encouraging RTC scientists to make more presentations on the SFSU campus and other public venues, as well as at other universities and scientific conferences, developing additional educational programs and cultivating a media presence at RTC, and improving RTC's website. The Committee was also persuaded that changing RTC's name to Tiburon Romberg Marine Center might contribute to improving visibility. Making RTC more visible should also be a component of Advancement's efforts to give SFSU a better-defined image in the Bay Area.

6. Recommendation: Improve RTC's Identity as an Educational Program

An important aspect of RTC's current mission is "to educate and train the next generation of scientists." This is accomplished effectively both in the classroom and research laboratory. RTC provides its students with graduate and undergraduate courses taught by RTC faculty. Unfortunately, these courses are not identified with RTC since the course prefixes are associated with SFSU academic departments (BIOL, CHEM, GEOG, GEOL and METR). Marine Science graduate courses (MSCI prefix) taken by RTC students are offered through the CSU's Moss Landing facility. RTC's identity as an academic unit is further blurred by the fact that RTC is not included in the Academic Programs section of the University Bulletin. Its graduate students obtain a Biology degree (usually the MA in Biology: Concentration in Marine Biology) through SFSU's Biology Department.

In order to establish its own academic identity, RTC should develop and offer its own undergraduate and graduate certificate programs and courses with an RTC prefix. This would assist in recruiting graduate students and enhance the image, identity and visibility of RTC.

Enrollment in classes taught at RTC is low. Distance learning would be a realistic approach to increase enrollment in these classes. On-site housing for graduate students would also improve student recruitment.

7. A transition package for Alissa Arp

Professor Arp has given the last ten years of her professional life to the management of RTC. Under her direction, the RTC has a) accomplished a tenfold increase in the volume of grant funded activity, b) recruited ten tenure-track and ten research faculty whose scientific contributions have helped to build a national and international reputation for the Center, and c) secured more than 8 million dollars from private, public, nonprofit and federal sources for the modernization of RTC facilities. The Review Committee believes that Professor Arp's performance justifies awarding her a special transition-year salary and release-time package and careful consideration of her potential contribution to development and advancement activities on RTC's behalf in future years.

We believe it is in RTC's and the campus's interest for COSE to negotiate a future role for Professor Arp which takes advantage of her capacities for development and advancement in RTC's behalf. As an initial step, we recommend continuation of Professor Arp's current salary level during the

year following the date she steps down as Director. If the campus wants to promote the kind of commitment that Professor Arp has given to RTC over the last 10 years, it should reward her record of achievement. Doing so will set a good example and help in recruiting good directors and managers.