**International LTER Open Science Meeting**

**Report on Supplemental Funding to the LTER Network Communications Office**

In March 2016 NSF’s LTER program and OISE awarded $70,000 to support travel for US LTER investigators to attend the First Open Science Meeting of the International Long Term Ecological Research Network. The Network Communications Office accepted the funds to distribute on behalf of the Network.

Guidance from Saran Twombly, then-Director of the LTER program, in consultation with Lara Campbell, Program Director of OISE’s Partnerships for Enhanced Engagement in Research (PEER), suggested the following priorities for funding distribution:

* Evidence that the meeting will stimulate new international collaborations
* Evidence that attendance would strengthen ongoing collaborations
* Priority given to early-career researchers
* Maximum of 2 individuals per site

The Network Communications Office solicited applications for travel support from across the LTER Network and within two weeks, received 61 applications totaling $160,000. To assist in making the hard choices, we requested feedback on applications from LTER Site PI’s—who know their personnel best—and asked senior investigators to strictly limit their budget requests to $3000.

In this process, we aimed to balance input from site PI's with the chance to create a sense of opportunity for emerging investigators. In the end, the pool of 25 award recipients generally reflected the composition of the application pool in terms of career stage and gender.

On April 4, we notified travel award recipients and reminded them of ILTER’s (extended) April 10 abstract deadline. We notified the unsuccessful applicants on April 5.

In addition to distributing the funds, the U.S. LTER Network Communications Office distributed reminders of various meeting-related deadlines, fielded questions from U.S. participants, and assisted the ILTER organizing committee in gathering basic site-related data for US LTER Sites.

Over 300 delegates from 30 countries attended the first open science meeting of the International LTER Network from October 9-13 in Kruger National Park, South Africa. In total, 53 US LTER investigators attended, with 24 receiving NSF funding through the NCO, making the U.S. the second-largest national delegation to the meeting, after the host country, South Africa.

Mark Schildhauer, Director of Computing for NCEAS and the NCO and Marty Downs, NCO Communications Lead, attended on behalf of the NCO. Tiffany Troxler and Bill McDowell, who co-chair the U.S. Network’s ILTER Committee, attended on behalf of the Network.

Articles on the [LTERNET web site](https://lternet.edu/ilter2016) and the [SAEON Newsletter](http://www.saeon.ac.za/enewsletter/archives/2016/october2016/doc01) provide general descriptions of the meetings and programs, which were excellent. Workshops—one on uncertainty and one on distributed experiments—offered a particularly fruitful way to encourage collaboration. And

the responses of individual attendees were perhaps most encouraging:

“I met another young scientist doing aquatic biogeochemical research in Africa.  She helped me troubleshoot a method that is relatively easy to set up in the US but complicated in southern Africa, given resource and analytical limitations.”

—Bonnie McGill, a PhD candidate at Kellogg Biological Station LTER

“The ILTER meeting was impactful.  David Lindemayer said something that stuck with me: synthesis builds on ideas, whereas integration deals with data.  Synthesis doesn't have to be hindered by the lack of comprehensive integration of data within and among LTER networks.

I was approached by Scott Collins (Editor in Chief of BioScience) who solicited my cross-site poster presented at ILTER as a synthesis paper.  He also solicited the LTER and ecological theory paper that Evelyn, Sara Baer, and I are finalizing.”

—John Kominoski, early-career investigator at Florida Coastal Everglades LTER

“I actually got my start in Ecology thinking about Mediterranean-type ecosystems and convergent evolution of plants in similar environments separated by large distances…[which] has been important and influential to my more recent work on convergence of function in arctic plant canopies, and it was great to have those ideas refreshed with the discussions during our Fynbos field trip.

I had a chance to talk with several people about my "functional convergence" ideas, and have already sent off reprints to a couple of the folks I met and talked to at Skukuza.  I am hoping this exchange continues.”

—Gus Shaver, a senior ecologist working at the Arctic LTER Site

“I met with folks from the inshore marine node of SAEON after the meeting, and they were inspired enough by our presentation and site that they are now planning a kelp forest oriented long-term research site based in Cape Town, in collaboration with faculty and researchers at UCT and the Dept of Fisheries.  We hope this will be the beginning of a valuable relationship with South African marine ecologists.”

—Robert Miller, an early career investigator at the Santa Barbara Coastal LTER

“I am working on a new paper with Peter Haase of the German LTER network based on some of the ideas that I presented during my plenary talk on Critical Zone Observatories.  I will also be working with him as one of the Guest Editors of the special issue of Science of the Total Environment…I met with a recent PhD, Dr. Eddie Riddell of Kruger National Park, who is interested in possible collaboration on quantifying nutrient export in rivers draining several Kruger watersheds.”

—Bill McDowell, co-PI, Luquillo LTER

These brief excerpts demonstrate the wide variety of connections that are possible in an in-person, science-focused setting. The next ILTER Open Science Meeting is planned for 2019.

As the International LTER Network comes into its own—defining its role among many international research organizations and finding the funding sources that can sustain it—a strong connection with the US LTER Network can offer encouragement and inspiration for both US and International scientists.