

20 February 2014

Mr. Alan Shaffer
Acting Assistant Secretary for Research & Engineering
U.S. Department of Defense
3030 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-3030

Dear Mr. Shaffer:

IEEE-USA strongly supports the Air Force Office of Scientific Research (AFOSR) and its outstanding basic research program, which should be maintained at its current percentage of the total DoD S&T budget and be conducted from its present location in Arlington, Virginia. IEEE-USA believes that changes to AFOSR proposed by the Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL) and others would do lasting harm to our nation's security and would undermine the effectiveness of the Air Force.

The AFOSR basic research program promotes U.S. military superiority through highly innovative science and engineering. It supports research at U.S. universities that provides the bridge between fundamental science and future military applications. Additionally, it trains future engineers and scientists in critical disciplines, such as electrical engineering, computer science, and mathematics. This emphasis on long-term research leads to revolutionary advances in military capability, and it also has resulted in civilian applications with major benefit to the general public.

AFRL has proposed that AFOSR be moved to Dayton, Ohio from the Washington metropolitan area and that its budget be reduced by a percentage substantially exceeding proposed reductions to the Air Force budget as a whole or to the AFRL budget. We believe that these actions would not be in the best interest of DoD or the nation.

Almost all federal basic research offices are located in the Washington metropolitan area, with AFOSR, ONR, DARPA, and NSF within a few blocks of one another. ASD(R&E) recognized the value of collocation, when it had AFOSR move to Arlington in the 1990's. Likewise, DoD recommended as part of the 2005 BRAC study that all DoD basic research offices be collocated "at a single location in a single facility, or a cluster of facilities." The BRAC Commission concurred with the importance of a "Co-located Center of Excellence" and warned that "placing the organizations onto a military installation would restrict their key partners' access to them."

Experience with DoD organizational moves suggest that AFOSR will suffer a disastrous loss of personnel, who will not relocate. Given the existing hiring freeze, replacing them externally would not occur. Because AFOSR has the unique mission within the Air Force of identifying and funding promising basic research, few appropriately experienced personnel are available elsewhere within the Air Force.

Consequently, AFOSR's focus on basic research would shift to AFRL's focus on short-term applied research, fundamentally changing AFOSR's long-term orientation. Especially in this time of severe budget pressures, relocation and consolidation is likely to significantly weaken the Air Force's basic research program. IEEE-USA urges OSD to disapprove the move and to reduce the budget cut.

IEEE-USA is an organizational unit of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc. (IEEE), the world's largest organization for technical professionals, and a leading educational and scientific association for the advancement of technology. IEEE-USA fosters technological innovation for the benefit of all, including more than 200,000 U.S. engineers, scientists, and allied professionals who are members of the IEEE. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact IEEE-USA Washington DC staff, James Savage at james.savage@ieee.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary L. Blank". The signature is written in a cursive style and is placed on a light-colored rectangular background.

Gary L. Blank
2014 IEEE-USA President