

Message to the ECORD science community

The recently released “New Science Plan” has set the stage for the next phase of ocean drilling, post 2013. There is a will from all three funders of the current platforms (the JOIDES Resolution, Mission Specific Platforms and the Chikyu) to continue offering access to these facilities to the international scientific community to implement this exciting plan. However, the message sent out by NSF has generated a lot of questions about the future of scientific ocean drilling.

The reality of shrinking science budgets in an unstable global economy makes it difficult to continue with the current architecture and funding model of IODP. This led NSF to decide independently to run the JOIDES Resolution in a different mode. However, NSF also aims to maintain the integrity of the international scientific ocean drilling community as well as international collaboration and coordination among the nations providing platforms. ECORD has already planned a meeting with NSF to initiate discussions about the access to the JOIDES Resolution and MSPs. In parallel, ECORD is also in contact with our Japanese colleagues from MEXT and CDEX to discuss access to the Chikyu.

We need to find the best international framework and funding scheme for continued access to all three types of drilling vessels by the global science community, beyond countries providing platforms. Moreover, we need to maintain the international spirit and vision built over years of collaboration. I have discussed this with the members of the ECORD executive and I am confident that all current and potential new partners of the drilling program will make this happen.

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