

Dr. Geoff Abers
MARGINS Steering Committee Chair
Lamont-Doherty Geological Observatory
Palisades, NY 10964-8000

March 31, 2009

Dear Geoff:

Thank you for the response of the MARGINS Steering Committee (MSC) to the Decadal Review Committee's (DRC) report. On behalf of NSF let me congratulate the MSC for receiving a very positive and constructive review of the Program. The review ran very smoothly in large part due to the hard work of the MSC in preparing the background documentation.

Although NSF has accepted the DRC report in principle, internal discussions within the Foundation about the future of the MARGINS Program are likely to continue over the next several months.

At this juncture, however, the involvement of the broader geosciences community in determining the direction margins research should take in future is seen as crucial by the Foundation. Thus, the MRC and MARGINS' Office (which will be extended through FY2010) is encouraged to submit a proposal for a community workshop (with break-out sessions, as needed) with the objective to consider the following several elements and produce a draft science plan: 1) compelling science issues that the community would like to see addressed in a possible successor program; 2) thematic vs "focus-site" (or mixed) approaches to margins research, both pros and cons; and 3) justifications for a special program with sequestered funding (rather than a "directed" program within Core).

A mid-2010 target date for producing a draft science plan is seen as appropriate and NSF's decision to continue with MARGINS as a special program will depend on a review of these plans.

Yours truly,

Bilal U. Haq
Marine G&G/OCE
For MARGINS Program.