

ARCSS Program | Message from the ARCSS Committee

ARCSS Note #5 (01 August 2005): Call for Communities of Practice

Dear Colleague:

As you likely know from previous communications from the ARCSS Committee (see: http://www.arcus.org/ARCSS/message_013105.html (http://www.arcus.org/ARCSS/message_013105.html)), as part of the ARCSS Program focus on system-level research and stronger interdisciplinary collaboration, the ARCSS Committee is encouraging the formation of Communities of Practice (CoPs). CoPs are groups of researchers who organize around a set of system science questions, and can be disciplinary, interdisciplinary, or legacy groups. CoPs will not be organized by formal infrastructure, membership, or duties, but will be able to receive a nominal level of support (as funding allows) to facilitate communications, such as teleconferences, website resources, and similar assistance from the ARCSS Science Management Office (currently at ARCUS). We are inviting members and groups of the arctic research community to initiate ARCSS CoPs through submission of an online one-page concept paper.

The CoPs have two functions. The first is to develop strong interdisciplinary research in areas that are key to understanding the Arctic as an integrated system. While this may seem to imply that the activities of the CoPs will lead to funded initiatives on focus questions, there is absolutely no guarantee that this will be the case. As many of you are aware, the current ARCSS budget is tight and planning for several large initiatives (e.g., International Polar Year) is underway. Despite this financial limitation, we need the CoPs to provide the intellectual direction and ferment necessary to a high-quality science program.

The second key function of the CoPs is to facilitate multi-level communication between the community and the ARCSS Committee, as well as between and among the CoPs. By fostering better communication, the CoPs will produce the best system science, and will assist in assembling broad expertise into interdisciplinary teams to address system-wide research issues.

The ARCSS Committee wants to hear from established and nascent CoPs. We are requesting a short, summary CoP description, or concept paper, from two kinds of groups:

- Those that have already coalesced around questions relevant to arctic system science, and
- Those that are interested in forming new groups, with the idea that they will develop more detailed science questions and structure as they progress in the development of a particular community.

Researchers interested in forming a Community of Practice (CoP) will submit a one-page concept paper to the ARCSS Science Management Office (SMO) through an online form. The one-page CoP concept paper gives a brief overview of the nature of the CoP, the scientific focus, and the types of ARCSS SMO support that would facilitate CoP development. Concept papers may be submitted at any time. Providing the scientific focus of the CoP generally aligns with ARCSS goals, the submitted concept papers will be published to the ARCSS website to encourage and facilitate community discussion. The ARCSS Committee intends to interact with all of the groups submitting a CoP concept paper.

The process by which CoPs are developed and established is new and will doubtless be refined with time. It is unlikely to be entirely smooth. For example, we expect that some CoPs that have a closely allied focus may be encouraged to merge efforts. Within the limits of available resources, we intend to nurture emerging groups as much as possible. The process is open-ended; as new and important science issues come to the fore, we expect fresh CoPs to form and old ones to disappear.

We look forward to working with you on this ARCSS science planning process.

To submit a Community of Practice concept paper, go to:
<http://www.arcus.org/ARCSS/cop.html> (<http://www.arcus.org/ARCSS/cop.html>)

For more information about the ARCSS science planning process, go to:
<http://www.arcus.org/ARCSS/communityplanning.htm> (<http://www.arcus.org/ARCSS/communityplanning.html>)