

Nomination of Dr. Brian W. Sheron, Director, Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research,
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, for the Roger W. Jones Award for Executive
Leadership 2012

*Summary of nominee's strong commitment to effective continuity of government, through
successful development of managers and executives.*

Dr. Sheron's accomplishments in the personnel area are as impressive as his technical and organizational accomplishments. He has been recognized as a consistently outstanding leader throughout his career. His extensive mentoring and coaching skills have resulted in the development of a cadre of seasoned, diverse managers, who as a set, have been consistently recognized by the NRC's superior ratings in Federal Employee Viewpoint Surveys.

Dr. Sheron leads by example by supporting important agency programs such as Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and succession planning/staff development. He has served and continues to serve as a mentor for several senior executives and staff. He has embraced the concepts and principles of EEO as evidenced by his successful record in recruiting, developing, and promoting minority and female staff. While serving as a mid-level manager in NRR, Dr. Sheron recognized the need to enhance outreach to African-American engineers to improve the agency's recruitment. Instead of relying on the usual recruitment process, Dr. Sheron took the initiative to develop a program to encourage African-American students from local universities (Howard University and Morgan State University) to consider NRC for summer, co-op, and permanent employment. This initiative was well-received and quickly expanded to a successful agency-wide practice. Dr. Sheron also served as the NRR liaison to the NRC's Advisory Committee for African-Americans and the NRC's Committee on Age Discrimination. He periodically met with each of these groups, discussed their concerns, and provided leadership in establishing diversity improvement plans. Recently, Dr. Sheron initiated actions to enhance the agency's diversity efforts by leading the NRC's major Office Directors in creating new diversity measures that more accurately captured the agency's efforts. This has significantly enhanced the value of the diversity measures used by all the offices. Dr. Sheron also was the first Office Director to employ a wounded veteran under the Operation Warfighter effort. Complementary to this effort and under Dr. Sheron's leadership, RES has created a revised Diversity Plan that became the model used by the entire agency.

Dr. Sheron promoted staff development, retention, and career broadening through challenging special assignments, rotational opportunities, and training. He encourages talented employees to pursue advanced degrees and foster technical leadership. For example, his current Deputy Office Director obtained her doctorate through the NRC's graduate fellowship program while she was employed in his division in the 1990's. He manages and motivates the staff by ensuring that performance assessments are reflective of actual performance, thereby creating accountability and pride in the work being accomplished. He challenges individuals to capitalize on their strengths and encourages direct reports to coach one another.

His commitment to developing new managers is evidenced through success in the placement of division staff in formal agency management development programs. The results of his commitment to employee development are also clearly demonstrated through the advancement of division staff to positions of increasing responsibility throughout the agency. Through Dr. Sheron's support, division staff are also routinely offered opportunities for developmental assignments in other agency program offices, in the Office of Executive Director for Operations, and in Commissioner and Commission-level offices. Dr. Sheron also serves as a mentor to

several staff, and he has sponsored several individuals' participation in the agency's Leadership Potential Program and Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program. Three of the agency's six key technical Office Directors, and numerous managers at the deputy rank, have been mentored by Dr. Sheron.

Dr. Sheron is very supportive of rotational opportunities, developmental assignments, and training opportunities that develop staff, managers, and executives for future opportunities. He recently pursued a rotational opportunity to send his Deputy Director to one of the regional offices for six months to broaden her experience in implementing our regulations "in the field." In her place, he had a Division Director from a different office backfill the position, providing this employee invaluable experience and knowledge of the research organization. Other recent examples of his initiative in the development of the management team include the permanent swap of two Division Directors between RES and the Office of Nuclear Security and Incident Response, and a rotation of a Deputy Division Director to a Division Director position in the Office of Nuclear Materials Safety and Safeguards. In addition, Dr. Sheron typically allocates over \$300,000 for external training for his staff per year, which is focused on staff and management career development. As mentioned previously, he also serves as a long-standing mentor, and more importantly, encourages similar arrangements at all levels of the office.

At the direction of Dr. Sheron, RES has taken a lead role in the agency's knowledge management activities to ensure that information is transferred to junior staff before the more senior staff retire or leave NRC. Dr. Sheron initiated the development of a new agency publication series focused on knowledge management in which events, activities and information pertinent to the agency's history and mission are captured in a centralized manner. RES also provides agencywide seminars on technical and regulatory matters confronting the staff to enhance its knowledge base. Recent seminars that Dr. Sheron was instrumental in developing include a review of agency lessons-learned following the Accident at Three Mile Island, a summary of improvements in fire regulations following the 1975 Browns Ferry Fire, and the Experimental Basis for Modification of Cladding Embrittlement (a summary of the history of nuclear fuel cladding issues and recent research). In addition, Dr. Sheron initiated, designed, and worked with the agency's Office of Human Resources to institute a more theoretically and mathematically based Reactor Fundamentals course to facilitate the transition of recently hired general engineers into working in the nuclear engineering field. The pilot of the course was highly successful and is now being offered at NRC's Professional Development Center.

To gain further efficiencies, Dr. Sheron implemented significant changes to the RES budget execution process using information technology to enhance access to real-time data. Dr. Sheron emphasized accountability from senior management down to the project manager level. Because budget execution was more closely tracked, contracts were funded with less margin, effectively freeing up excess funds that could then be allocated to other projects dedicated to emergent, unbudgeted issues. As a result, RES is routinely number one in agency financial performance metrics, and is more effective at handling unplanned and unbudgeted work requests from the regulatory offices.

Over the last several years, the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey has identified NRC as one of the best places to work in the Federal Government based in part on many of its employee programs as well as its overall morale. Under Dr. Sheron's leadership, RES has undergone a significant transformation, and results from the NRC's Office of the Inspector General NRC Safety Culture and Climate Survey identified a double-digit improvement in each one of the 17 categories from the 2005 and 2002 surveys. This increase is directly attributable to

Dr. Sheron's support of an open and collaborative work environment in RES and his vision that the office continues to be a learning organization. The office has very high morale that exceeds the U.S. National and High-Performance Norms in most categories. The values he espouses and practices include work/life balance, high-quality physical working conditions and environment, teamwork and respect, fair performance evaluation, and effective communication by supervisors. These values are exemplified in Dr. Sheron's monthly Brown Bag luncheons, which provide informal settings for staff to both discuss and ask questions regarding current work matters, etc. Throughout his career, Dr. Sheron has taken a sincere interest in his staff's professional lives, and he has personally committed to the practice of verbal and written commendations, in addition to the more formal awards program. He ensures that the Employee of the Month Program is a peer recognition program that allows staff to nominate their fellow workers for either cash or time off awards. He is regularly used as a "sounding board" by numerous staff throughout the agency, as they look to him for advice in developing and growing as employees and future leaders of the NRC.

Under Dr. Sheron's leadership, RES has enhanced its partnership with universities that perform needed research under contractual arrangements. This benefits NRC in that universities are a cost-effective option. Providing work to professors and graduate students helps ensure that a viable pool of junior engineers are being trained in the nuclear field. Dr. Sheron also takes the time to maintain these relationships and has been invited to give seminars and lectures for the past 10 years at well-known engineering schools such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Pennsylvania State University.

Prior to the recent nuclear "renaissance," which resulted in the first new reactor licenses issued in over 30 years, Dr. Sheron had the foresight to confront one of the agency's most serious management challenges – human capital planning. Through Dr. Sheron's leadership in NRR, his subordinates designed and implemented strategies to maximize his divisions' human resource potential and achieve a high quality, diverse workforce. In anticipation of future losses in technical expertise as the workforce ages, Dr. Sheron actively supported the agency's strategic workforce planning initiatives and innovative, creative ways to attract and retain both experience and entry-level talent. For example, in the area of materials engineering, he facilitated the hiring of a significant number of experienced staff. These new hires had substantial experience outside the agency either from other regulatory bodies or the nuclear industry. These new hires had the necessary skills and expertise to deal with the increasing number of materials issues that were occurring as a result of the plant aging process.

The success of Dr. Sheron's years of investment in the development of managers is most clearly evident in the agency's successful response to the tragedy of the events at the Fukushima nuclear complex in Japan 1 year ago. Dr. Sheron is one of the key managers on a steering committee that guides both short and longer term agency actions to improve safety for the U.S. reactor fleet. This group's work has been publicly praised as they very effectively identified, with often limited information from overseas, key lessons to be applied to U.S. designs. Dr. Sheron's contributions were invaluable, and his lasting impact on the "regulatory thought processes" of other managers will be just as important as the actions taken.

In summary, Dr. Sheron has continued to serve as a positive role model of the key leadership attributes so essential to the success of the agency in accomplishing its mission. He has been a steadfast supporter of improving diversity of both "personnel" and "thought" at the NRC, and

he is committed to ensuring proper succession planning and continuity. He is an advocate for the formal mentoring program, and is a leader in actively pursuing developmental opportunities for staff and managers at all levels.