



## Reflections on PEET, the Partnerships for Enhancing Expertise in Taxonomy\*

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### Abstract

The 12-year old PEET engages a retired program officer in a question-answer session focused on the aspirations and tribulations of the NSF-sponsored research, training, and computer infrastructure program, Partnerships for Enhancing Expertise in Taxonomy.

**Key words:** Biodiversity Crisis; taxonomic impediment; training taxonomists

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### Introduction

In 1995 the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) initiated PEET, the Partnerships for Enhancing Expertise in Taxonomy, to achieve three interrelated goals: training new taxonomic experts, conducting monographic research, and building computer infrastructure in biodiversity science (Rodman & Cody 2003). PEET was the Systematic Biology Program’s second response, following the 1991 start of the Biotic Surveys and Inventories Program, to the call by the U.S. National Science Board (NSF’s governing body) for focused research addressing the Biodiversity Crisis (NSB 1989). It also responded to the community-based alarm voiced in the Systematics Agenda 2000 report (SA2000, 1994) that taxonomic expertise was in danger of extinction for many groups of poorly known organisms. More than 60 PEET projects targeting an extraordinary range of seed-free and notochord-free organisms have been funded since then, following six biennial rounds of competition, and the program remains ongoing. Following the most recent meeting of PEET awardees and their students, at the University of Georgia (PEET VI, Athens, Georgia, March 2007), the 12-year old PEET engaged a program officer now retired from the agency in a question-and-answer session