

DRAFT Minutes

National Council of Space Grant Directors March 14 and 15, 1997 Washington, DC

NOTE: The Council meeting was preceded by a reception hosted by the Aerospace States Association on March 12, and by visits from Consortia Directors and staff to State Congressional delegations on March 13.

Friday, March 14th

The Council meeting was called to order at 8:30 AM by Chair Mary Sandy.

Chair's Report

Mary reported on recent activities and reviewed the meeting agenda. A copy of the Council's response to the draft regional realignment proposal was distributed. It was noted that Kennedy Space Center has been left off the list of participating NASA Centers. Julius Dasch responded that this was an oversight. Mary assigned leaders for breakout sessions later in the day to review and comment on the latest draft "Best Practices" document, noting that Council feedback must be completed by the end of this meeting.

Mary summarized her participation in a meeting of the Aerospace States Association (ASA) on March 13. She was invited to present an overview of Space Grant and the Directors Council to the ASA membership, followed by discussion of mutual goals and activities. The two organizations share an interest in National policy with regard to aerospace technology and education. Space Grant Consortia can provide effective National networking through its large membership, while ASA has an established link to State governments. Space Grant Directors have been added to the mailing list for the ASA newsletter to enhance communication.

During a closed session for Consortia Directors and staff, John Wefel reviewed feedback from the visits to Congressional delegations on March 13. After discussion, the following resolution was moved, seconded and approved without dissent:

" THAT THE COUNCIL APPROVES PROCEEDING WITH SEEKING SPACE GRANT BUDGET AUGMENTATION THROUGH LEGISLATIVE ACTION."

Program Manager's Update

Julius Dasch presented views of current events from the perspective of the Program Manager. He noted that he had a very productive working relationship with the Council and its Chairs- most recently Mary. He felt that Space Grant had reached a "turning point" at which it was increasingly important to integrate the Program with the rest of NASA's activities. He would like to see closer ties to the NASA Centers, and to the EPSCoR Program. He noted an increased priority on creating research infrastructure, citing an example of "Moonlink"- a collaboration involving Wisconsin Space Grant and the Discovery class mission: "Lunar Prospector."

Among the recent Program highlights, Julius noted that almost all Consortia now have Web Homepages. There are now 520 Space Grant affiliate institutions. The New York consortium is coordinating with Cayuga County and the Mission to Planet Earth (MTPE) office to create a remote sensing applications initiative. After 2-3 years of start-up, the NASA EPSCoR programs have begun to produce an impressive record of publication and successful grant-writing.

Julius described the DRAFT "Best Practices" document in terms of the need to respond to Administrator Goldin's mandate to measure and improve performance. The goal has been to create a set of practices which are common to all consortia, regardless of whether they are "Designated" "Program" or "Capability Enhancement" States. He thanked the Council for working with him on previous drafts, and for the input which will result from this meeting.

Budget Updates

Lynn Keffer reviewed recent developments in the budgeting/procurement aspects of the Program. All of NASA procurement is now moving from Headquarters to the Goddard Space Flight Center. She thanked the Directors for their prompt submission of annual budgets, and reminded them that the narrative portion of the budget should be as brief as possible to expedite processing. She asked for patience during the period of transition and HQ downsizing - matters such as foreign travel approvals cannot be turned around as quickly as in the past. She noted that the no-cost extensions on current grants would all be approved, but were delayed by a backlog at HQ. She also reminded Directors to ask their University Sponsored Research administrators to send quarterly budget updates ("272's") to her attention.

Financial Update

Julie Baker from the NASA Chief Financial Office described an issue with "uncosted" funding. The problem is that frugal management and other factors have resulted in many programs having large amounts of authorized funds which are unspent. For NASA as a whole, this amount of "uncosted funding" was \$4.5 billion at the end of FY95. The OMB and GAO are concerned with the size of this figure, and NASA is taking steps to reduce it. Grants to Universities tend to have a large percentage (although not necessarily a large dollar value) of uncosted funding. She asked for the Director's help in reducing unspent balances and in encouraging their University staffs to submit "272's" and other required documentation promptly. During discussion, it was noted that the turnover in grants to GSFC will "clean-up" existing Space Grant balances as of the end of any no-cost extensions granted (September '97). University Offices of Sponsored Research have come under increasing stress due to increased regulatory burdens and staff reductions, and this contributes to slow billing. Julie and Frank Owens thanked the Directors for their input, and said that more guidance on helpful measures would be forthcoming.

