

VSA/TIG UPDATE



March 2005

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CONGRESSIONAL OVERVIEW

NSGA FY 2006 Budget Request: NSGA requests a FY06 appropriation for Space Grant of \$29,550,000, a \$1,350,000 increase over the FY05 appropriation and a \$10,450,000 increase over the President's request.

In FY05, the Congress appropriated \$28.2 million for the Space Grant program. The following language was included in the FY05 omnibus bill:

"The conferees have included \$28,200,000 for the National Space Grant College and Fellowship program. This amount is an increase of \$9,100,000 to the fiscal year 2005 budget request. The amount provided will fund 40 states at \$575,000 each and 12 states at \$350,000 each as well as \$1,000,000 for administrative expenses."

In light of the President's FY06 budget, with across-the-board cuts in the NASA Higher Education Program, the NSGA Board revised the FY06 appropriations request from \$31,050,000 to \$29,550,000. This would include \$20.4 million for 34 states at \$600,000; \$7.65 million for 18 states at \$425,000; and \$1.5 million for the Space Grant Network Enhancement Award (competitive award that would broaden and increase the number of participating institutions in the Space Grant network). While the FY06 budget does not show a specific line item for Space Grant. The President's FY06 budget request for Space Grant is likely to be at \$19.1 million again.

Congressman Ralph Hall (R-4,TX) and Congressman Brad Miller (D-13,NC) have agreed to co-author the "Dear Colleague" letter to the House Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Science, State, Justice, and Commerce, and Related Agencies (SSJC). Senator Chuck Hagel (R-NE) and Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) have agreed to co-author the "Dear Colleague" letter to the Senate Appropriations Committee's subcommittee.

U.S. House of Representatives: The House Appropriations Committee has recently reorganized its appropriations subcommittees from 13 to 10: (1) Agriculture; (2) Defense; (3) Energy and Water; (4) Foreign Operations; (5) Interior and Environment; (6) Homeland Security; (7) Labor, Health and Human Services and Education; (8) Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs; (9) **Science, State, Justice, and Commerce, and Related Agencies;** and (10) Transportation, Treasury and Housing.

The SSJC Appropriations Subcommittee is responsible for several agencies formerly under the purview of the VA-HUD-Independent Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, including NASA, NSF, and OSTP. The members of the new subcommittee are: Frank R. Wolf (R-10, VA), Chair, Dave Weldon (R-15, FL), Vice Chair, Alan B. Mollohan (D-1, WV) ranking member, Charles H. Taylor (R-11 NC), Jose E. Serrano (D-16, NY), Mark S. Kirk (R-10, IL), Robert E. "Bud" Cramer, Jr. (D-5, AL), Patrick J. Kennedy (D-1, RI), Virgil Goode (R-5, VA), Chaka Fattah (D-2, PA), Ray LaHood (R-18, IL), John A. Culberson (R-7, TX), and Rodney Alexander (R-5, LA).

NSGA, on behalf of Space Grant, requested an opportunity to testify before the new SSJC subcommittee. Public hearings have not yet been scheduled: the Board will be notified when this takes place.

On February 17, 2005, Fred Gregory, NASA Deputy Administrator (currently Acting Administrator), testified before the House Science Committee on the FY06 administration's budget request for NASA. In the opening remark of this hearing, Congressman Sherwood Boehlert (R-24, NY) stated that his goal was to get a NASA reauthorization bill prior to the appropriations process. He affirmed, "I want to do an authorization bill because I think it's critical that Congress have a full and open debate on the President's Vision for Space Exploration and the future of NASA before NASA barrels ahead with the program. Congress has never endorsed – in fact, has never discussed – the Vision. What we did do, as part of a huge Omnibus bill, is provide the money to enable NASA to continue planning how it wants to go forward." In his remarks, Deputy Administrator Gregory talked about the President's Vision for Space Exploration initiative. He also stated that the FY06 budget included \$167,000,000 for the Office of Education. Chairman Boehlert's statement and Deputy Administrator Gregory's testimony can be found at <http://www.house.gov/science/hearings/full05/index.htm>

U.S. Senate: Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee have not accepted the House's Appropriations Committee organizational changes. Several plans are being considered on how to reorganize the structure of the Appropriations Committee but members have not yet voted on any. One of the rationales for the reorganization is to streamline the appropriations process and reduce the likelihood of a year-end omnibus appropriations bill. If the House and Senate subcommittee jurisdictions are different, a year-end omnibus for FY06 is viewed as highly likely.

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Office of Education Personnel Update: Recent changes in personnel at NASA's Office of Education are having a large impact on Space Grant. The departures of personnel at the senior management and programmatic levels are cause for concern for the future stability of the Space Grant program. In particular, the changes that are having the greatest impact are:

Deputy Chief Education Officer for Education Programs: This high-level position within the Office of Education, previously held by Dr. Clifford W. Houston, until his departure from NASA in October 2004, remains unfilled. The Office of Education initiated a search to fill the position in November 2004, but to date, no selection has been made.

Director of the Division of Higher Education: Dr. Brad R. Weiner (former PR Space Grant Director) finished his IPA in mid-January, and returned to his academic position at the University of Puerto Rico – Río Piedras. The Office of Education is currently conducting a search for a new division director. Dr. Katie Blanding, who has served as the Program Manager for the Graduate Student Researcher Program and NASA Faculty Fellowship Program, is the Acting Director for the Division of Higher Education.

Space Grant Fellows: Ms. Margarita (Magui) Cardona finished her term as a Space Grant fellow on January 31, 2005, and has accepted a management position in the sponsored research office of the University of Maryland - Baltimore County. While a search for a replacement for Magui has begun, no selection has been made. Dr. L. Michael Freeman has joined the Space Grant team at NASA HQ as a part time Space Grant fellow. While he will focus primarily on NASA EPSCoR, he will also assist Acting SG Director, Diane D. DeTroye, in managing Space Grant.

Space Exploration Academy: One of the results of the 2004 Aldridge Commission report is the anticipated creation of the Space Exploration Academy. A preliminary Statement of Work describing the future Space Exploration Academy was released by NASA in January 2005; an RFP is expected in early March. Many of the expected outcomes of the Space Exploration Academy are consistent with the ongoing work of the National Space Grant Consortium. Dr. Richard Henry, Director of the Maryland SG, has graciously volunteered to head up the effort on behalf of Space Grant.

2004 Competitions: Results of the 2004 Workforce Development Competition were released in January 2005. Awards were made in three categories: single-state proposals (32), multi-state proposals (1 award to 12 consortia), and International Space Station (ISS) Engineering Outreach (8 awards to 7 consortia). The 2004 competition for upgrades to designated states has yet to be announced, pending the implementation of a new process for internal competitions within the Office of Education.

FY05 Core Funding: Budget packages for the core funding (albeit at a significantly reduced funding level) for all consortia have been prepared by NASA Space Grant and are awaiting assignment of the accounts at GSFC. NASA HQ anticipates that the accounts will be created in the near future, and the grant packages will subsequently go out to the consortia without any further delays. Projections for the out-years in the FY06 budget for the Office of Education show still greater reductions. SG will have to be especially vigilant to avoid being a target of those cuts from its base budget.



NASA Acting Administrator to Attend National SG Directors Meeting: On Friday March 4, NASA Acting Administrator Frederick D. Gregory will address the National SG Director's Council Meeting in Arlington, VA. It has been almost ten years, since the NASA Administrator has attended a Space Grant National Meeting. His attendance presents an excellent opportunity to showcase the far-reaching merits of our program. Special thanks to the Minnesota Space Grant Consortium for helping to arrange Mr. Gregory's visit. Biographical information on Mr. Gregory can be found at http://www.nasa.gov/about/highlights/AN_Feature_Deputy.html.

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