Aligning Priorities and Budgets

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Problem Statement

- Aligning priorities and budgets is a problem for NASA, DOD and NOAA
- Seems most acute at NASA, but perhaps that's just because NASA gets more press coverage
- U.S. government spends a lot of money on space – are bigger budgets needed or does the money need to be spent more wisely?

NASA as a Case Example

"NASA is being asked to accomplish too much with too little."

> NRC Space Studies Board "An Assessment of Balance in NASA's Space Science Program" (2006)

It's 2009 – has anything changed?

The Obama Administration and NASA

The outyear budget projections accompanying the FY2010 budget request for NASA tell the tale -- the agency's budget is essentially flat after FY2010

 NASA still is being asked to accomplish too much with too little if current direction is maintained

NASA and the Way Forward

- Program needs to be realigned to match expected resources
- Terrific that Congress appropriated more than requested for FY2009 and added \$1 billion in the stimulus bill, but one cannot plan a program based on the hope that Congress will continue to add money

"Hope is not a strategy."

Conventional Wisdom

Step One: Control Current Programs

 Get control of current programs to avoid cost overruns that eat the seed corn and stretch schedules

"The current system is designed to maximize the number of programs that are started—and minimize the number that are completed."

Tom Young

Step Two: Determine Priorities

- Is the current split in the NASA budget appropriate?
 - 54% for human spaceflight
 - 24% for science
 - 18% for cross-agency support
 - 3% for aeronautics
 - 0.6% for education
- NRC "decadal surveys" determine 10-year priorities for space science disciplines and for aeronautics based on consensus of relevant "community"
- Augustine panel will help to determine priorities for human spaceflight, but will not set them – who will?

The Augustine Panel

Different from an NRC decadal

- "aim to identify and characterize a range of options" not priority setting
- Small blue ribbon panel with a short time frame, not a broad committee with specialized panels and time to develop consensus
- Not everyone agrees on its mandate or timing

"Instead of providing Constellation with funds to move forward, [the FY2010 budget] is delaying the current mission while seeking to have a do-over of plans that have been authorized by both Republican and Democratic Congresses."

Senator Richard Shelby (R-AL)

Augustine Panel

- Time will tell how influential it is over the long term considering those limitations
- Questions the panel hopefully will address
 - Why 2020 for "boots on the Moon"?
 - Does the humans to Mars paradigm resonate with the people who will still be around when we get there?
 - How can NASA avoid promising more than can be delivered?
 - What's to be done with the space station now that it is finally near completion, shouldn't we <u>use</u> it?

One Option that Could Be Considered

- Instead of redoing what we did in the 1960's, focus instead on developing technologies that allow us to send self-assembling habitats and laboratories that will be waiting for crews when they get to their destination
 - Would allow crews immediately to stay for months not days
 - Could do exciting things sooner to build interest
 - May engage younger generations
 - May provide more "spin-offs" to build taxpayer support

Step Three: Stick to the Priorities Unless They Cross a "Trip-Wire"

- Cancel what doesn't fit (like DOD's TSAT program)
- Underestimating costs and overestimating TRLs are the problems they are because that has been a successful strategy for getting programs started, and once started, programs are very difficult – but not impossible – to cancel
 - Congress has established "trip-wires" for DOD and NASA where programs must be reauthorized, cancelled, or restructured if they exceed cost or schedule baselines by certain amounts
 - Congress has directed the NRC to identify trip-wires (and get independent cost estimates) for decadal priorities
 - To change paradigm, policy and budget makers White House, House of Representatives, and Senate – are going to have to be tough

Leadership is Critical

- Who's in charge?
 - For the Executive Branch the President, but he needs help!
 - Where is the National Aeronautics and Space Council?
 - Do we need a national space strategy to implement national space policy?
 - For Congress need to get the House and the Senate to agree, but generally (not always, but generally)
 Congress follows White House lead, so back to the above bullet