

NASA Advisory Council Recommendation

FY 2014 Transitional Year for Education and Public Outreach 2013-01-08 (EPOC-02)

Recommendation:

Rather than halting nearly all NASA Education and Public Outreach (EPO) programs immediately, fund and recast FY 2014 as a transitional year where existing programs can be evaluated, and slated for shutdown, transfer to other agencies, or continuance in an orderly fashion. In particular, the Agency should fight for continuance of EPO activities that are enabled by capabilities that are uniquely NASA's.

Major Reasons for Proposing the Recommendation:

NASA EPO programs are arguably the most inspirational and successful infusion of science into the public consciousness. In a time of austerity we recognize it is important to consolidate education efforts and eliminate redundancies. NASA programs built around missions such as Hubble and Curiosity are, however, unique and NASA-specific, as they are built around dynamic missions, not textbook knowledge. We feel that thoughtful deliberation is necessary to develop a transition plan which preserves NASA's unique capabilities, eliminates redundancies, and best serves the interests and strategic vision of our nation.

Consequences of No Action on the Proposed Recommendation:

Immediate shutdown will prematurely terminate programs in progress, cause loss of NASA's educational institutional knowledge, and dramatically disrupt the continuity of public messaging at a time when NASA's popularity and inspirational impact are at a decades-high level. We also feel cutting NASA's educational programs will significantly degrade the nation's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education capability during this critical time.

NASA Response:

NASA's Office of Education appreciates the support and insight of the NASA Advisory Council; however, NASA non-concurs with the recommendation. Consistent with the Administration's plan, NASA's Office of Education will lead the Agency's coordination with other Federal agencies in pursuit of the Administration's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education goals. NASA will strive to maintain the best of these activities, which provide unique NASA experiences and resources to students and faculty.

NASA's education portfolio will focus on four priorities, which will contribute toward the Administration's goals for STEM education: STEM Engagement, NASA Internships, Fellowships and Scholarships, Educator Professional Development, and Institutional Engagement. In a new approach, NASA will consolidate the education functions, assets, and efforts of the Mission Directorates, Offices, and Centers into a single coordinated STEM Education and Accountability Project.

Enclosure

As part of NASA's STEM interagency coordination effort, NASA will ensure that the Agency's assets are put to use effectively in support of the STEM activities that will be directed by the National Science Foundation, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Department of Education. NASA will make its rich content knowledge and other assets available to these agencies as they facilitate Federal STEM education activities through the Administration's Committee on STEM Education (CoSTEM) process for agency coordination, bringing NASA's inspirational activities to a broader audience. This includes the infrastructure necessary to support the rigorous collection, evaluation, and dissemination of evidence of NASA's contributions towards the achievement of the wider STEM goals.

Representatives from the 13 Federal agencies are meeting to ensure that the Federal assets entrusted to each agency are coordinated and put to best use in support of the Nation's educators and learners. NASA is committed to close collaboration with other STEM agencies and to inspiring future generations to seek careers in aerospace.