

NASA Advisory Council Recommendation

Disruption of Schools and Other Identified Challenges Resulting from the Ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic

2022-01-07

Name of Committee:	STEM Engagement Committee
Chair of Committee:	Mr. Daniel Dumbacher
Date of Council Public Deliberation:	March 1, 2022
Short Title of Recommendation:	Disruption of Schools and Other Identified Challenges Resulting from the Ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic

Recommendation:

The Council recommends that the NASA, other Federal Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) agencies, and other partners (current and potential) should collaborate to support the STEM education community in addressing the disruption of schools and other identified challenges resulting from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. NASA alone cannot solve this.

Major Reasons for the Recommendation:

The pandemic has created significant disruption in the education community and NASA's STEM involvement can be a key aspect of addressing resulting challenges.

Consequences of No Action on the Recommendation:

There are long term implications to the workforce, lack of coordination around recovery efforts, duplication of efforts, gaps in support for the community and could impact metrics/evaluation efforts.

NASA Response:

NASA concurs with the recommendation that NASA, other Federal STEM agencies, and other partners (current and potential) should collaborate to support the STEM education community in addressing the disruption of schools and other identified challenges resulting from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, the Office of STEM Engagement (OSTEM) took steps to respond to the disruption of schools as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. These included:

- NASA awarded seven informal education organizations with Remote Opportunity Rapid Response (RORR) grants to promote STEM learning. The selected organizations offered innovative remote learning opportunities, capable of reaching a diverse set of students with relevant NASA content, with specific focus on helping to

Enclosure

- minimize the inequities faced by communities without ready access to information and communication technology.
- NASA worked alongside other Federal agencies as part of a Community of Practice to develop an intentional plan for virtual internships in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. OSTEM's rapid shift to a virtual internship program did not impact the Diversity Equity Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) goals of the program. Virtual placements broadened the geographic reach of the program and allowed for flexibility that benefited students underrepresented or underserved in STEM. NASA is committed to working toward an effective hybrid model that continues to support broadened participation.
 - NASA, alongside other Federal agencies, contributed to an online platform built by the Office of Science and Technology Policy to ensure STEM Engagement activities were available for the widest audience possible.

NASA continues to be committed to developing approaches and opportunities that address disruptions in school and increasing the Agency's contributions to broaden student participation in STEM. To do this, NASA OSTEM is incorporating a range of strategies in collaboration with educators and educational institutions, industry, academia, and informal educational organizations to engage students more effectively and widely. During this time, as we enter the third year of the pandemic, NASA aims to continue providing support that is relevant in the context of needs and gaps associated with the pandemic and is focused on ensuring we can reach underrepresented students in STEM, including girls and students of color.

Additionally, OSTEM works alongside other Federal STEM Education agencies as part of the Federal Coordination in STEM Education (FC-STEM), serving on the Convergence Interagency Working Group (IWG), the Transparency and Accountability IWG, and the Diversity IWG. NASA's presence on the FC-STEM ensures coordination with other Federal agencies and allows for OSTEM to identify gaps in support for the community. For example, OSTEM will enable FC-STEM members to participate in NASA's online Community of Practice for educators, CONNECTS. Federal agencies will contribute content and events to the CONNECTS platform in support of educators. Moreover, as part of the work of the Transparency and Accountability IWG, NASA will support the development of recommendations for common metrics. OSTEM has also initiated an external K-12 stakeholder needs assessment and gap analysis to characterize the needs of the K-12 ecosystem. OSTEM will provide a report to the NASA Advisory Council's STEM Engagement Committee regarding the study's findings.