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Workshop 9

State and Local Governments

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Abstract

The Virginia Space Grant Consortium approach to a close working relation to state and local governments is presented as a model for consideration. State government relations are especially important in that this is a primary resource in securing matching funds. Avenues for establishing these relationships are listed and discussed.

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This workshop is intended to provide models for how the several Space Grant programs may interact effectively and on a continuing basis with local and state governmental agencies.

Since the circumstances of each state are distinctive, generalizations are difficult; the Virginia experience is offered as an example with which comparisons may be made or generalizations drawn.

The initial influence in the Commonwealth was Governor Gerald Baliles, who identified aerospace in early 1987 as an economic and educational factor potentially of great importance. His intuition was reinforced by a blue ribbon study commission, and as a result, the Governor appointed his Space Business Advocate, "to work with representatives of businesses, state agencies, and universities to achieve this goal."

At the same time a major focus was given on aerospace commercialization by the Center for Innovative Technology (CIT), a private agency, created and funded in 1984 by the Commonwealth to foster the interaction of universities and industry through research, technology transfer, and commercialization. CIT has provided strong leadership in building joint funding of university research with industry, drawing attention to Virginia as a center of aerospace activity, and directly cultivating and encouraging the growth of commercial space activity, e.g. small satellites.

CIT has taken the leadership in helping state agencies identify potential applications of remote sensing and to understand how the utility of these applications can be realized. The Space Business Advocate works closely with CIT, so that they periodically briefed the Governor and his Cabinet (Economic Development, Education, Transportation, Natural Resources) on progress. The written progress reports have been widely distributed.

At the Governor's request CIT prepared a brochure, "Virginia Focuses on Space; The Commonwealth's Heritage, Resources, and Activities in the Enterprise of Space," which has been widely distributed within and outside the Commonwealth to businesses, public agencies, and individuals. The brochure conveys a strong impression of the Commonwealth's substantial aerospace activity and aspirations.

When the Space Business Advocate undertook the proposal effort for Space Grant designation, it was with the specific support of the Governor and the appropriate agency heads. Participants in the Virginia Space Grant Consortium were also chosen with an eye to maintaining contact with state and local governments. Thus the current membership includes:

- * Virginia Tech
 - * Old Dominion University
- * University of Virginia
- * Hampton University
- * College of William and Mary
- * State Council of Higher Education for Virginia
- * Department of Education
- * Center for Innovative Technology (CIT)
 - * Science Museum of Virginia
 - * Virginia Air and Space Museum (VASM)
- * State Chamber of Commerce
- * NASA Langley Research Center (LaRC), Hampton

The Space Business Advocate serves as the initial Director of the Virginia Space Grant Consortium, thus maintaining the direct contact with the Governor.

The Consortium is also working to apprise individuals in the General Assembly about how Space Grant affects their jurisdictions. This is easiest in areas where commercial aerospace activity is already significant, such as Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads, where NASA LaRC is located. Interest in aerospace within the General Assembly is evident in the specific appropriations for the Science Museum aerospace exhibit and toward the construction of a \$22 million educational and research facility in Hampton, which will include the VASM. The Governor's attention has already given a high profile to the CIT and Space Business Advocate efforts to promote aerospace activity which has also heightened familiarity on the part of legislators. Even those from areas which do not have obvious aerospace activity, e.g. the rural Southwest, are aware of and interested in the impact which the Consortium and CIT might have on science and mathematics education, in particular, and also on commercial development.

Effecting relations with local government is easiest where activity is most apparent. This is certainly the case with the VASM, near NASA/LaRC, where local commitment to the financial success has focused attention. The Consortium has focused on school science and mathematics as an initial priority, and it is hoped that this will provide a link to local government. Important criteria for effecting meaningful interaction with state and local governments seem to be:

- * patron(s) or other clear connection with governmental leadership, e.g. Governor, agency head, committee chairperson;
- * a process or vehicle for continued association with the patron(s), e.g. economic development, education; "Space" usually should not be presented as an end interest in itself;
- * acceptance that Space Grant provides something of importance that is otherwise unattainable, e.g. support of state or local science and mathematics education by university aerospace faculty.

State and Local Government

This workshop addressed the intention of the Space Grant program to "encourage cooperative programs among universities, aerospace industry, and Federal, state and local governments." The discussion focused primarily on relations with state government, in part because this is the primary source of governmental cost sharing with the NASA program.

Commonly there is a desire to pursue association of a program with the State Chief Executive, and this can be a very important advantage in pursuing state budgetary commitments or attention from agencies and departments; however, Governors are usually very selective about direct association with programs. There are also dangers in identifying too closely with a specific Chief Executive; a successor may be reluctant to assume the priorities of his or her predecessor, and may instead pursue initiatives with no such identification.

However, there are other avenues for establishing substantial relationships within the Executive Branch, for example:

- * Assistants to the Governor - many of these people have regular access to the Governor and are often important contributors to policy and budgetary choices. Some states have a "science adviser to the Governor," or an equivalent, who is likely to be outside of the immediate Office of the Governor, but who may be an effective conduit, nevertheless. In addition, many are reasonably accessible and likely to find aerospace education, research, and commercialization appealing.

- * Agency heads and program directors - heads of education or economic development programs are especially likely to identify with the purposes of Space Grant; other possibilities might be natural resources or transportation. This can mean the secretaries, heads of higher education or public school agencies, or advisory bodies to the agencies, as examples.

- * Industry leaders - many of these people have regular access to the Office of the Governor, the secretaries, or agency heads. In some cases and industry organization, such as the Chamber of Commerce, may be appropriate.

- * College and University Alumni - governors, agency heads, etc.. almost certainly went to college somewhere, and most are responsive to approaches from their alumna maters. Many other alumni are closely involved with these same people and can act as intermediaries.

One should also consider cultivating relationships with the Legislature, either in addition to those with the Executive Branch, or instead of, if necessary. Every college or university is in the district of at least one and usually two legislators, i.e. one each from the lower and upper houses, who are very interested in cultivating and supporting these assets for their constituents. In addition, legislators share with their executive colleagues a likely alma mater. Other alumni are friends or supporters of legislators and can help in the cultivation of support for Space Grant.

In most schools, relationships with the Executive and Legislative Branches of government are handled by offices of governmental (state and/or federal) relations, special assistants to the President, and the like. These can be very useful avenues to the most appropriate officials and legislators. It is advisable, in any event, to alert the university offices of an interest in or intention to contact governmental officials and offices.

Most of the workshop participants seem not to have formal relations with the Executive or Legislative Branches in their states, but feel that doing so is important and desirable.