

# Issue: DARPA and University Research

**Position:** The computing research community is concerned about ways in which the current funding regime at DARPA could discourage innovative research and discourage the participation of university-based researchers. Additionally, CRA members have expressed concern that research aimed at advancing the leading edge of IT has not received adequate focus within the agency.

- Many of the technologies that have enabled our current economic prosperity and increased our national security have their roots in university research supported by DARPA.
- The Internet, graphical user interfaces, and global positioning systems are all the result of long-term, cutting-edge, university-based research, supported decades ago by DARPA.
- DARPA's recent move to a "milestone" based approach to funded research – where programs are evaluated on a 12 to 18 month cycle with "go/no go" decisions at each step – encourages the proposing of less-than innovative research and poses considerable logistical challenges to university-based researchers.
- CRA is also concerned about a worrisome trend at DARPA of taking formerly unclassified research projects and turning them "black" or classified. While there are quite a few areas of research which rightly should be classified for national security reasons, there should also be some concern that programs are not turned black -- and therefore out of public scrutiny -- simply because they might be controversial. There is a cost to science when research goes black.



“DARPA has been recognized as the high-risk, high-payoff defense agency ever since its inception. The committee, however, is concerned about recent trends in the agency-sponsored research that appear more shortsighted in their approach, particularly the emphasis on 12- and 18-month reviews in order to attempt to eliminate non-promising technologies.”

- Senate Armed Services Committee Report accompanying FY 2003 Defense Authorization Bill

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