Issue: DARPA and University Research

Position: The computing research community is concerned about ways in which the current funding regime at DARPA could undermine 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 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 classifying formerly unclassified research projects. 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.

- The President has requested significant increases to DARPA's IT R&D accounts for FY 2007, yet we remain concerned about cuts to DARPA's Cognitive Computing program proposed by Senate appropriators. Cognitive computing research is focused on intelligent intrepretations of signals and data, on controlling unmanned vehicles, and on amplifying human effectiveness. Its aim is to reduce U.S. casualties by providing improved command and control and tactical planning against adversaries, as well as improved training systems. Cutting support so significantly for this research will hamper advancements in defense-related IT in the short- and long-term and will slow technological advancements essential to current and future military operations in Iraq and around the globe.

> **"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

For more information, visit the CRA Government Affairs website: http://www.cra.org/govaffairs