2016-03-03

Department of the Navy Key Strategic Issue List

Naval Postgraduate School

http://hdl.handle.net/10945/48270
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By Naval Postgraduate School - March 3, 2016

The Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) recently posted the Department of the Navy (DON) Key Strategic Issue List (KSIL) for 2016 (link below). The Secretary of the Navy directed the creation of the KSIL in May 2015 to identify the DON’s key research issues and share them with a diverse audience. The objective is to drive a cross-disciplinary approach to problem solving and broaden access to completed research studies. The KSIL is a living document, covers all functional communities, and will be updated regularly to reflect the research needs of the U.S. Navy.

Introduction:

The Navy’s Science and Technology (S&T) and strategic enterprise spans a wide range of programs overseen by the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition (ASN/RDA). Those programs include university executed basic research managed by the Office of Naval Research (ONR) as well as more applied research managed by ONR and by the extensive Naval Research Laboratory and the many warfare centers. The S&T enterprise utilizes a variety of outreach and strategic planning activities to prioritize Navy research areas. In this document, a current Key Strategic Issues List derived from a number of those activities is presented. In his memorandum of May 5, 2015 on this topic, the Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) acknowledges that:

“The Department of the Navy must create a process by which we identify the DON’s key research issues and share them with a diverse audience. This ensures a cross-disciplinary approach to problem solving, a proven approach for fostering innovation. It is to our advantage to share unclassified research needs with the public to leverage the outstanding graduate programs in the United States.

The May 5, 2015 SECNAV memorandum directed Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition (ASN/RDA) to “solicit unclassified research needs from all functional communities across the DON and provide results to Naval Postgraduate School” (NPS).

It goes on to say that “The Naval Postgraduate School shall compile the results and publish the U.S. Navy Key Strategic Issues List, Academic Years 2016-2017 and ensure this list is publically accessible on the NPS website.”

After consultations, ASN/RDA issued a follow-on memorandum on November 18, 2015, which clarified by indicating that “For this initial effort we are leveraging existing processes used by ONR and NPS to identify and collect research topics for FY2016.” He also notes that:

“The issuance of the 30 year RDT&E plan in combination with the specific list of unclassified research topics compiled by DON researchers along with those available to industry, academia, University Affiliated Research Centers (UARCs) and Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs) will spark innovation to meet the future needs of our warfighters.”

Approach Taken:

This current Navy KSIL is derived from the following recent or ongoing activities within the Navy’s S&T enterprise:

1. The U.S. Navy Key Strategic Issues List, Academic Year 2015-2016 compiled by OPNAV N3/5 and the Naval War College and focused on issues within the strategy and policy domain (See Appendix A - Naval War College 2015-2016 KSIL).

The original publication provides an expanded discussion of each of the issue areas listed.
2. Issue areas gleaned from the many topics submitted to the NPS Naval Research Program (NRP) solicitation from across the OPNAV codes, Fleet Forces Command, and ASN/RDA. Where appropriate, individual topic titles from this solicitation are listed as examples below under the broader issue area headings.

The NPS NRP is now in its third year. The Program is chartered by the Chief of Naval Research and the Commanding General, Marine Corps Warfighting Lab provided NPS with the goals to: “become a recognized partner for Naval R&D organizations to seek out in response to short, medium, and long term time frame research requirements; develop a recognized pool of faculty research expertise to address these same requirements; offer a venue for NPS students to conduct thesis research in areas directly relevant to Naval challenges and research needs, and to become the recognized leader in promoting cutting edge Naval education through utilization of the research devised to meet these requirements.” The NPS NRP is relevant to this effort because of the broad input around naval research requirements provided by the annual participants who participate in the repeatable process from within the operational Navy and Marine Corps command structure.


ONR provides detailed information about its S&T strategy and the broader context on its website. The upper level S&T focus (i.e. issue) areas, with topics identified as research requirements, are reproduced here (See Appendix B - Office of Naval Research Science and Technology Focus Areas 2015).

4. The ONR Future Naval Capabilities (FNC) process.

Initiated in 2002, the FNC program is designed to develop and transition cutting-edge technology products to acquisition managers within a three- to five-year timeframe. The FNC Pillars, with topics identified as research requirements, are reproduced here (See Appendix C - Office of Naval Research Future Naval Capabilities Pillars).

5. The NPS proposed Issue Areas.

These additional issue areas were gleaned from the NPS NRP process. The proposed Issue Areas, with topics identified as research requirements, are reproduced here (See Appendix D - Naval Postgraduate School Issue Areas).


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