Robert N. Saunders, PhD

Website: robert-saunders.info (703) 982-0588
Email: info@robert-saunders.info Active DoD TS/SCI w/ CI polygraph

OBJECTIVE – Accelerate technology development, acquisition, and fielding to give warfighters a decisive edge in dynamic operational environments.

EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy, Industrial Engineering, Texas A&M University
Certificate in Applied Statistics, Statistics, Texas A&M University
Master of Science, Aerospace Engineering, Texas A&M University
Bachelor of Science, Aerospace Engineering, Virginia Tech

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Deputy Chief Engineer (GG-14, 0801) (Sept 2024 – present)
***Acting* Chief Engineer (GG-15, 0801)** (Jan 2025 – May 2025)
Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) Systems Acquisition Directorate
National Reconnaissance Office, Chantilly, VA

- Lead systems engineering for the multi-billion dollar next-generation overhead SIGINT architecture, consisting of >10 interdependent MSAs, to ensure end-to-end closure.
- Employ and coordinate digital systems engineering (DE) practices across SIGINT to accelerate system acquisitions and ensure seamless cross-collection system operations.
- Serve as the PM/COTR for an industry consortium, driving the maturation of architecture-wide standards.
- Lead SIGINT international partnership efforts to strengthen NRO capabilities and promote collaboration among FVEY partners.

Deputy Branch Chief (GG-13, 0801, supervisory) (Sept 2023 – Sept 2024)
Mission Manager (GG-13, 0801) (Feb 2023 – Sept 2023)
Office of Space Launch – Launch Management Division
National Reconnaissance Office, Chantilly, VA

- Oversaw the supervision of both civilian and military staff, managing hiring processes, onboarding programs, and providing ongoing mentorship.
- Identified, developed, and rapidly acquired advanced launch and on-orbit capabilities utilizing both FAR and non-FAR methods.
- Facilitated and coordinated strategic outreach initiatives with industry and government partners to effectively identify and address customer requirements.
- Managed stakeholder inputs and tracked progress throughout the PPBE process to ensure alignment and accountability.

Mechanical Engineer (NP-03, 0830) (Sept 2016 – Feb 2023)
Materials Science & Technology Division
U.S. Naval Research Laboratory, Washington D.C.

- Provided critical insight and guidance using subject matter expertise in metal additive manufacturing (AM) and machine learning (ML).
- Co-principal investigator for multiple DoD programs in AM and traumatic brain injury (TBI), involving Tri-Service participation, with total funding exceeding $30 million.
- Authored technical briefs for senior leaders, subject matter experts, program managers, and non-technical audiences on complex scientific topics.

Biomechanics Engineer (June 2015 – Sept 2016)
Leidos Inc. c/o U.S. Naval Research Laboratory, Washington D.C.

- Developed comprehensive strategies to analyze blast injuries sustained during weapons training and combat, resulting in enhanced protection for Warfighters.
- Established a method to evaluate combat helmets against over 300k potential ballistic threats and performed statistical analysis to identify areas lacking protection.

AWARDS/TRAINING/CERTIFICATIONS

Awards

- 'Outstanding' (5) rating in every year of service since EOD
- NRO Innovation & Achievement awards (6 total)
- NRO Office of Space Launch Senior Technical Civilian – 3QFY23
- NRO Office of Space Launch Innovation in Launch Team Award - 2QFY24

Training

- DoD Executive Leadership Development Program (Cohort 37)
- Naval Research Laboratory Edison Memorial Graduate Training Program Recipient
- NRO Leadership Launch for Supervisors

Certifications

- NRO Contracting Officer Technical Representative (COTR)
- DAWIA Practitioner Certification in Engineering & Technical Management
- DAWIA Foundational Certification in Test & Evaluation

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Reviewer for multiple journals, incl. Journal of DoD Research and Engineering
- Technical conference session/symposium speaker, organizer, and chair
- Recurring mentor for interns, students, and new hires
- Invited speaker/panelist at academic, leadership, and professional forums
- Represent senior leaders at multi-agency forums and working groups
- Collaborate across the DoD/IC, USG, and international partners in support of the mission

SKILLS

- Computer Languages – Fortran, Python, R, Matlab
- Software – Abaqus, COMSOL, Solidworks, Mathematica, Microsoft Office
- Machine learning, digital engineering, and model-based systems engineering
- Machine shop, mechanical testing, and field testing experience
- Windows, Linux, Unix experience
- Programing, planning, budgeting, and executing (PPBE)
- Acquisition strategy and contracting
- Time, Project, and Personnel Management inc. supervision of civilian & military workforce

PUBLICATIONS – 1 Book Chapter, 9 Journal Articles, 17 Conference Articles, 4 Tech Reports