

**Rascal**

Mission Overview Document

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# Executive Summary

Rascal’s mission is to demonstrate proximity operations within a small satellite architecture, including stationkeeping, “Escape”, and rendezvous.

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# Program Introduction

Rascal is a spacecraft mission that seeks to demonstrate the performance of in-orbit proximity operations within a small spacecraft architecture. Proximity operations are defined as the performance of orbital maneuvers, such as Stationkeeping, Rendezvous, and Collision Avoidance, relative to a resident space object (As Defined in Table 1-1).

**Table 1-1. Key Proximity Operations Definitions**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Proximity Operation Terms** | **Definition** |
| Stationkeeping | Maintaining a set relative displacement between two space objects for a period of several orbits |
| Collision Avoidance | Performing an orbital maneuver that increases the relative displacement between two space objects, as to avoid on-orbit collisions and potential orbital debris creation. |
| Rendezvous | Performing an orbital maneuver that decreases the relative displacement between two space objects within a set distance for a period of several orbits. |
| Resident Space Object | Any satellite or object residing in space |

Proximity operations have been designated by the NASA Innovative Advanced Concepts (NSPIRES) program as one of many transformative ideas that will help enable new aeronautics and space systems capabilities. If successful in demonstrating the performance of such operations, Rascal would act as a stepping stone to future development and refinement of the technologies and processes involved with the performance of proximity operations, potentially leading to the creation of small satellites that are capable of inspecting, or even repairing, damaged satellites or crew capsules, saving millions of dollars and man hours associated with the replacement of said systems that would normally have no cost-effective means of being repaired in-orbit.

This document serves to elaborate on the relevance and feasibility of proximity operations demonstrations for small spacecraft from historical, analytical, and operational perspectives, as well as outline the mission requirements, success criteria, and design flow-downs for the Rascal mission itself.

# Mission Relevance and Justification

## Relation to NASA Objectives

The Rascal mission relates directly to NASA Strategic Goal 3.3 (As Outlined in *NASA’s FY 2011 and FY 2012 Annual Performance Plans*), which states that missions should be pursued that “Develop and demonstrate the critical technologies that will make NASA’s exploration, science, and discovery missions more affordable and more capable.”

As a CubeSat mission seeking to demonstrate proximity operations that have not been performed on a system of equal scale (More On This in Section 3.2), the Racal mission meets both the requirements of demonstrating critical technologies within an affordable spacecraft system. As such, missions such as Rascal’s (Including both PONSFD and ARAPAIMA, as Discussed in Section 3.3) are highly desirable from a NASA development perspective. The reason for this rests in the potential of these types of systems to conduct inspections and maintenance on dying or decommissioned satellites, potentially saving satellite developers millions of dollars in costs associated with replacing such satellites that were previously unrecoverable.

## Historical Proximity Operations Relevance

Rendezvous and proximity operations (RPO) missions have a long history in human spaceflight dating back to the first Gemini missions. It was not until the previous decade did interest arise in approaching RPO missions with purely robotic systems. For the most part, RPO missions have been solely under the purview of NASA and the military; only recently have private companies and universities made inroads in this area. Each mission has taken a different approach to RPO and has ranged from small CubeSats to massive multi-million dollar satellites. The successes and failures of these missions have helped drive the constraints of the Rascal Mission (Discussed in Section 5.2.6). A summary of theses missions, as well as the success, cost, and lessons learned from their execution, are listed in Table 3-1.

Many previous RPO missions have been large million dollar satellites, each of which approached their mission in many different ways in an attempt to demonstrate many different RPO capabilities. Out of these missions, three were selected for more analysis based on the types of RPO capabilities that they demonstrated.

The first of these spacecraft is the Demonstration for Autonomous Rendezvous Technology (DART) mission, built by Orbital Sciences Corporation for NASA in an attempt to develop and demonstrate autonomous navigation and rendezvous capabilities on a microsatellite platform. Its mission involved attempting to dock with an experimental communication satellite. The primary objectives of the mission were to navigate autonomously using GPS and rendezvous using an Advanced Video Guidance Sensor. Within a few hours of launch, it was able to reach its target, but experienced a malfunction as it began its approach, resulting in a soft collision between it and the target vehicle, which lead NASA to end the mission and begin the effort to find the cause of the malfunction. Though not publically released, the soft collision was likely a result of the chaser satellite approaching the target in a manner that the navigation algorithms used to control its propulsion system did not account for. This prevented the Advanced Video Guidance Sensor from switching to its fine tracking mode from its course mode, leading the chaser to think it was further from the target than it actually was, eventually causing the collision. The total cost of the mission was $98 million. The main lesson to take away from this mission is that even when a large amount of resources and money are used to develop and test a mission, the risk associated with its execution never completely goes away. A secondary lesson that can be taken from the mission is that the method of tracking relative position between two objects is complicated and prone to risk, thus making it a key point of investigation, development, and testing for any RPO mission.

The next mission that is to be discussed is Orbital Express, which was built by Boeing and Ball Aerospace and managed by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency*(*DARPA*)* and the Marshall Spaceflight Center. The Orbital Express mission was meant to demonstrate several servicing operations as well as rendezvous and proximity operations. It consisted of two spacecraft, with one being the target and another being the servicing module. The primary spacecraft was able to refuel and replace the batteries of the target spacecraft. The total cost of the mission was $300 million. The main lesson from this mission is that demonstration of extremely complicated RPO maneuvers is possible, but requires a large amount of resources, development time, and testing, likely more than a university-class spacecraft can achieve. Thus, it is necessary to limit the scope of Rascal mission to a level where it can actually be achieved while still being able to demonstrate RPO maneuvers that are of use to the grater aerospace community.

The final large-scale spacecraft mission that was analyzed was the Micro-satellite Technology Experiment (MiTEx) mission. This mission consisted of three spacecraft working in geostationary orbit, with one serving as an experimental satellite and the other two as inspection satellites. The inspection satellites, with masses of 225 kg each, were technology demonstration satellites capable of maneuvering in relation to other satellites and providing platforms to inspect other satellites without detection. The satellites demonstrated autonomous operations, maneuvering, and station-keeping capabilities. They were built by Lockheed Martin and Orbital Sciences and managed by DARPA. They were able to complete their mission with the experimental satellite, and then moved to inspect a failed missile detection satellite to try to find the cause of the failure. The total cost of the mission was $24.6 million. The lessons learned from this mission are similar to those learned from the Orbital Express mission, with the extra edition of the usefulness of allowing for extended satellite operations when selecting the amount of propellant to fly with an RPO mission.

More and more private institutions are starting to move into conducting RPO missions with smaller spacecraft. Currently the missions done by private institutions have been primarily proximity operations, though they still demonstrate technologies that could be used on future RPO missions.

The first of these was SNAP-1 developed by Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd and the University of Surrey. The 6 kg nanosatellite was to approach and rendezvous with Tsinghua-1, anther spacecraft that was integrated into the same launch vehicle. After launch SNAP-1 ended up in an orbit below that of Tsinghua-1 and, being relatively light, suffered more from the effects of atmospheric drag than the much heavier Tsinghua-1 microsatellite. As a result, the two spacecraft became more separated, and, at their worst, Tsinghua-1 and SNAP-1 were about 15,000 km apart. However, SNAP-1 eventually brought itself within 2000 km of Tsinghua-1 by means of propulsion maneuvers. Thus, while a true rendezvous was not achieved, SNAP-1 was able to demonstrate the agility and maneuverability of its propulsive system under automatic control. In stark contrast to the previously discussed missions, the mission cost of SNAP-1 came in at less than $1 million. This (relatively) small price-tag shows that it is possible to demonstrate proximity operations within a small spacecraft architecture. However, the quick separation between the target and chaser satellite indicate that there are large risks associated with attempting proximity operations demonstrations between two spacecraft that enter orbit with even slightly different initial conditions. In terms of the Rascal mission, it is absolutely necessary to mitigate this risk to the fullest extent possible, as its occurrence would result in the failure of the mission as a whole.

The next mission looked at was Aerocube-4, which was developed and operated by the Aerospace Corporation. It consisted of 3 1U CubeSats that each had solar panel wings that closed and opened in an attempt to alter the ballistic coefficient (Relation That Indicates the Effect of Drag on a Given Spacecraft) of each spacecraft, thus allowing for efficient formation flying (Maintenance of Small Relative Distances Between Each Spacecraft). Each satellite included three-axis attitude control to 1 degree absolute accuracy, a 0.3-square-meter deployable deorbit device, and sub-miniature reaction wheels. The satellite also carried a launch environment data logger that recorded ascent accelerations, vibration, pressure and temperature. In order to efficiently manage the formation of each spacecraft, a new three-node automated ground system network was developed. High-precision orbit determination (OD) was made possible by a GPS receiver installed on each satellite that collected fixes on a regular basis and delivered the measurements of the satellites’ position and velocity. The ultimate cost of the mission was around $200,000. Lessons learned from this mission include the importance of knowing and recording the exact location of spacecraft conducting RPO missions, whether accomplished by position/velocity motion sensors, GPS, or ground based tracking, and that high precision formation flying (or stationkeeping) can be accomplished through the implementation of relatively simple attitude control systems.

The final mission looked at was DRAGONsat, a partnership between University of Texas-Austin and Texas A&M. It consisted of two 1U spacecraft, one developed by UT Austin (PARADIGM) and the other one developed by Texas A&M (Aggiesat2). They were each deployed at the same time, with an objective of collecting two orbits worth of GPS data to determine how far apart the spacecraft separated from each other. The mission was ultimately a success and data was collected from both satellites on the general change in relative displacement between each of the spacecraft. The mission cost around $100,000. The lessons learned from this mission include further demonstration of the reliability and usefulness of GPS data for proximity operation missions.

Though other RPO missions beyond the ones discussed here have been conducted after the past 10-15 years, none have approached the demonstration of RPO maneuvers in the manner that the Rascal mission is set out to demonstrate. DART may have demonstrated the use of image navigation for rendezvous, while SNAP-1 showed the potential of CubeSat sized propulsion systems for relative position changes, and Aerocube-4 proved that stationkeeping can be maintained when precise satellite location tracking is made available, no single spacecraft mission has attempted to address each of these issues and more in the way that Rascal seeks to demonstrate for the costs typically associated with developing a CubeSat mission. Figure 3-1 consists of a comparison of the weight of a given RPO mission vs the cost associated with its development and launch, as well as whether or not each mission was considered a success.

Weight vs Cost Chart.tif

**Figure 3-1. Comparison Between the Cost, Mass, and Success of Historical RPO Missions**

As can be seen from the figure, Rascal falls into a nice gap between its small-scale CubeSat and large-scale microsatellite and military satellite RPO mission counterparts of the past. It carries the benefit of having a low price tag associated with its development, as well as being able to demonstrate proximity operations the types of which have not been seen on such a small scale, with the foresight gained from previous mission failures and successes going into its mission design. Even with these missions in mind, there is still a large amount of risk associated with the Rascal mission itself. However, the historical perspective provided by each of the discussed missions offers great insight into how exactly these type of missions can fail, and thus, what part of the mission to focus on in this early development stage.

**Table 3-1. RPO Mission Summaries and Lessons Learned**

| **Mission Name** | **Institution** | **Satellite Type** | **RPO Demonstrations** | **Cost** | **Success** | **Lessons Learned** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| DART | NASA | Micro | Rendezvous | $98 Million | No | RPO Missions Have Many Failure Modes, Navigation Algorithms Must be Robust |
| Orbital Express | DARPA | Military | Rendezvous, Refueling, Component Exchange, | $300 Million | Yes | Mission Scope As a Factor of Available Resources is Important |
| MiTEx | DARPA | Military | Inspection, Station Keeping, Rendezvous | $28 Million | Yes | Extended Operations Can Demonstrate as Much Use as Primary Mission |
| SNAP-1 | SST | CubeSat | Rendezvous | $1 Million | Partial | Initial Conditions are Important in Determining the Success of a Low-Cost RPO Mission |
| Aerocube-4 | Aero Corp | CubeSat | Stationkeeping | $200 Thousand | Yes | Position Tracking is Crucial in a Successful RPO Mission, Useful Maneuvers can be Demonstrated with Small Spacecraft |
| DRAGONsat | UT Austin/ Texas A&M | CubeSat | Position Tracking | $100 Thousand | Yes | Spacecraft Separation can Occur Quickly Even with Similar Initial Conditions |

## Related Activity in Proximity Operations

Several private institutions are developing RPO missions using the CubeSat architecture while getting funding from NASA to do so. Each of these potential missions were studied as to differentiate Rascal from the back and further justify its flight. Also, based on the types of problems that these particular missions are attempting to address can help identify areas of the Rascal mission that will need to be focused on in the future, as well as those that need to be further reviewed.

The first mission that was considered was the Proximity Operations Nano-Satellite Flight Demonstration (PONSFD) mission that is currently under development by Tyvak Nano-Satellite Systems LLC and sponsored by NASA Ames Research Center. It consists of a set of two 3U spacecraft and seeks to demonstrate rendezvous and proximity operations. The concept of operations of the mission will consist of simultaneous deployment from the same spacecraft, after which an initial health check will be performed on each 3U. The mission then enters its main rendezvous and proximity operations flight demonstration phase. The spacecraft then enters an orbit in which it can maneuver to an initial proximity distance and maintain a set distance from the other, otherwise known as formation flying. Cube-sat one will perform rendezvous and proximity operations relative to Cube-sat two. Then the roles are reversed. The mission then enters increased and decreased range rendezvous and proximity operations scenarios. The mission ends when the spacecraft deorbit. This mission has received $17 million in funding from NASA and has the support of NASA Ames in its development, further high-lighting the interest of NASA in these types of missions. Even though PONSFD’s mission seeks to demonstrate proximity operations similar to those that Rascal seeks to demonstrate, it is in no way guaranteed to A) Launch and B) Achieve mission success. Thus, it is still worth pursuing the Rascal mission, as both its and PONSFD’s success would further support the validity of proximity operation systems on small-scale spacecraft and further advance NASA’s Strategic Goal 3.3, as discussed in Section 3.1.

The next mission that was considered was the Application for RSO Automated Proximity Analysis and Imaging (ARAPAIMA) spacecraft, under development at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, the University of Arkansas, and Red Sky Research LLC. Its mission consists of a 6U spacecraft that will autonomously maneuver into close proximity of a resident space object. The concept of operations of the mission begins with the ejection of the spacecraft in orbit, at which point its solar panels will be partially deployed. After this, it utilizes a sun tracker to point at the sun and completely deploys its panels, as to expose the mission payload. The vehicle then under goes orbit and system checkouts, which upon passing, allow it to approach a selected resident space object. Finally, the mission then enters science operations, which consist of proximity operations being performed relative to said object. Based on the missions discussed in the previous section, as well as the general cost associated with tracking and reaching a resident space object (Which has only previously been accomplished by MiTEx), this mission is highly resource intensive and vastly complex in comparison to most CubeSat missions. However, this mission has also received the support of NASA, further underlining the usefulness of such missions.

The final mission analysis looked into the Glint Analyzing Data Observation Satellite (GLADOS), which is under development at the University of Buffalo. GLADOS is a satellite designed to evaluate the size of space debris through the use of cameras capable of observing the reflection of light off of small-scale orbital debris, as to calculate the size, mass, shape, spin, and possibly the path that a given piece of orbital debris is on. The spacecraft has the capability to help in predicting the path of space debris several months in advance, which might prevent orbital collisions. Though not explicitly a proximity operations mission, GLADOS shows that it is possible to observe and analyze RSO’s in a statistically significant manner, potentially allowing for the use of such systems in performing proximity operations relative to another satellite.

# Mission Objectives

## Baseline Mission

**The main objective of the Rascal mission is to demonstrate proximity operations on a small-satellite architecture.**

With this in mind, Rascal’s baseline mission involves first being launched to and released in orbit. Once Rascal is released from its rocket and achieves stabilization, it will enter standby mode. During checkout the ground crew establishes contact with Rascal, confirming that each of its subsystems is working properly. Once confirmed this has been confirmed, a command will be issued for Rascal to initiate its separation sequence, at which point Rascal would separate into the Jade and Nephrite 3U spacecraft. During and after separation, the spacecraft will perform thrust maneuvers in an attempt to reduce their initial relative velocities. Once it has been verified that each satellite has achieved stability relative to each other, the actual primary mission can begin, which involves the performance of stationkeeping, collision avoidance, and rendezvous maneuvers relative to each other, the success criteria of which are defined in Section 4.2. Once the baseline mission has been completed relative to one of the satellites, extended operations would involve performing the same maneuvers relative to the other spacecraft. Once all of the propellant has been used on each spacecraft, the mission will be considered complete and the satellites would either be decommissioned or put into standby mode until deorbiting and burning up upon re-entry into Earth’s atmosphere.

## Success Criteria

In order to achieve full mission success, the Rascal mission shall demonstrate the performance of the following proximity operations relative to either the Jade or Nephrite spacecraft, as defined in the Team Bravo Request for Proposal (RFP):

1. Stationkeeping within a 10-75 m sphere of a resident space object for at least 5 orbits.
2. A Collision Avoidance maneuver by performing an orbital maneuver that intentionally increases the final relative displacement between the mission spacecraft and a resident space object to at least 100 meters in a maximum time of 1 orbit.
3. Rendezvous by performing an orbital maneuver that intentionally decreases the final relative displacement between the mission spacecraft and a resident space object to within 50 m for a period of time of at least 5 orbits.

# Requirements Verification

## Rationale and Taxonomy

Requirements Verification is the method of verifying that mission success has been fully met by a given mission. This mission success is determined by the ability of a mission developer’s design to meet a checklist of primary requirements that have been issued by a potential customer (Such as NASA, Boeing, the DoD, Etc). If these top-level mission requirements are not met, it is within the customer’s judgment to determine whether or not their requirements were too strict, their desired mission is too impractical, or if their selection of mission developer is at fault. If it is the latter case, it is within the potential customer’s power to part ways with the mission developer, thus making any effort that went into the development of the mission a waste of time, money, and resources.

Hence, one of the most important portions of the preliminary stages of spacecraft mission design is properly defining mission requirements. In the case of the Rascal mission, the main source of these requirements is the Team Bravo Request for Proposal (RFP). This document describes both the type of mission that is to be attempted, as well as the success criteria associated with said mission, and thus is the main driver of mission design going forward. Implicit in these requirements is the need to remotely verify their successful completion when it comes time for the actual mission; otherwise the relevance of the Rascal mission would be moot and the rationale for its launch would be non-existent. Finally, even if the Rascal mission is designed to meet all of these requirements, and can demonstrate as much, it would be completely unreasonable for said mission to take an extended amount of time to be completed. The longer a mission takes to run out, the more resources have to be utilized in its operation and the more likely that it will experience a failure before mission success can be met. Thus, mission lifetime is a key factor in defining the mission success as a whole.

From these requirements (Known as the Primary Requirements) would then come all other requirements associated with designing a successful mission. Such requirements could be as simple as stating that the spacecraft must have a particular subsystem, or as specific as stating the force required to secure a bolt on the final spacecraft. Regardless, any of such requirements form a subset of one or more of the larger requirements above it.

The representation of the various types of requirements takes the form of a matrix consisting of the definition of each requirement, the method(s) with which it will be verified, the reason that such a requirement exists, and a requirement number for future reference.

There exist four different verification methods for each requirement can be verified:

1. **Test**: Requirements that necessitate some form of testing in order to be verified. Testing includes subjecting a component or system to vibration testing, verifying the amount of delta V that can be produced by the propulsion system, conducting thermal testing on the spacecraft system to verify that it can survive an on-orbit environment, etc. Each test will be documented in a testing document, which will in turn be used to verify that a particular requirement has been met.
2. **Analysis**: Requirements that can only be verified through computational analyses and not through physical measurement or testing. Requirements that fall under this category include calculating the thermal profile of the spacecraft system, determining the expected roll rates that can be achieved with its attitude determination an control system, finding the amount of propellant necessary to perform the mission itself, etc. Each analysis will have its own document associated with it that will be used to verify the successful completion of its corresponding requirement.
3. **Demo**: Requirements that involve demonstration in order to verify their successful completion. Requirements that fall under this category include showing that deployables will not be released until some amount of time after on-orbit ejection, that inhibits successfully cut power off to the entire spacecraft, and that the satellite communications system does not transmit during dispenser integration. Each demo requirement will be verified through test demonstration documentation prior to the actual demonstration of their completion before any organization that seeks to observe
4. **Examine**: Requirements that are verified through either visual inspection or physical measurement. Requirements that fall under this category include dimension constraints associated with the spacecraft’s external structure, the total mass of the spacecraft, etc. Each examine requirement will be verified though documentation supporting that the examination has been performed.

Each requirement will have one or more of these methods associated with its verification, as indicated by an X under its corresponding verification method column.

Each requirement will also have a brief rationale section associated with it. The rationale for each requirement will either be an extension of requirements higher up in the matrix or from constraints that have been imposed on the mission as a whole, as discussed in the next section.

## Mission Constraints

Mission constraints for the Rascal mission stem from many sources, ranging from limits on the physical size of the spacecraft used to complete it, the monetary restrictions associated with the development and integration of such a spacecraft, and the risk associated with its execution. Each of these constraints and more are described in detail in the following sections and are each crucial in both restricting the scope of the Rascal mission and allowing for its successful execution.

### Launch Vehicle Integration

One of the most important (and difficult) parts of any spacecraft mission is actually getting it off of the Earth’s surface and into orbit. Regardless of the work that is done preparing and developing the mission, if it isn’t able to be integrated into one of the currently available rockets, it will have no way of reaching orbit, and thus, no way of achieving its mission goal. Thus, it is key that whichever structure is designed to protect and encapsulate the spacecraft has the dimensions and mechanical interface necessary for it to be integrated into currently available satellite adapters.

Due to the shear amount of small spacecraft that have been launched over the past few decades, standards now exist for the integration of spacecraft into pretty much any currently available launch vehicle. Thus, if a mission follows any of these standards, it will be capable of integrating into a wide variety of launch vehicles without having to make any changes whatsoever in its integration method.

The type of adapter that a particular satellite architecture that a mission follows depends on the type of satellite that is to be integrated. Currently, there exist two major satellite classifications that any particular mission falls into: nano and micro-satellites. The following sections will discuss the definitions of each of the satellites that fall under each of these categories, as well as the pros and cons associated with each type.

#### Nanosatellite Classification

Nanosatellite class spacecraft (AKA CubeSats) are those satellites that have a mass of under 1.33 kg per 10 cm x 10 cm x 10 cm volume (AKA, One Standard Unit, or 1U). This satellite classification was developed at California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) in 1999 as a means of standardizing small satellite architectures across the entire small satellite industry. This served to facilitate reduced costs and time associated with the development of small satellite missions, thus allowing for organizations that would have previously not been able to develop and launch small spacecraft (Such as Universities and Privately Funded Corporations) to launch scientifically significant, impactful, low-cost missions. Nanosatellites come in several different sizes, ranging from 1U to 6U. An example of a 1U nanosatellite architecture, as defined by the *CubeSat Design Specification Document, Rev 12* is shown in Figure 5-1. Though the vertical dimension of each particular configuration depends on its type, the width of any CubeSat is limited to 100 mm, thus imposing a limit on the size that a given nanosatellite can occupy.



**Figure 5-1. CubeSat 1U Architecture**

This standardization of CubeSat sizes has allowed companies such as Clyde Space, Pumpkin, Tyvak, and Astrodev to produce commercially available CubeSat electrical power systems, batteries, motherboards, operating systems, and radios that can be integrated into virtually any CubeSat system with relative ease. This in turn allows for a greater concentration of effort in designing, building, and testing those components associated with the execution of a satellite’s primary mission, as opposed to focusing on the systems that indirectly support said components. As a result, these Commercially Off the Shelf (COTS) components have greatly reduced the time and resources required to design, build, and fly a small satellite mission.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| http://www.cubesatlab.org/images/AstrodevHelium-100.jpg | http://www.clyde-space.com/documents/405/405-large.png |
| http://www.cubesatkit.com/images/CSK_MB_710-00484-E.jpg  **Figure 5-2. (Clockwise from Top Left) Astrodev Helium Radio, Clyde Space Electrical Power System, Pumpkin Motherboard Rev A** | |

Another advantage of following a standardized satellite architecture is that it allows for the development of standard satellite deployers, the structures that hold nanosatellites during launch and ultimately eject them into space upon reaching orbit. These deployers, such as the Poly-Picosatellite Orbital Deployer (P-POD), Nanosatellite Launch Adapter System (NLAS), Canisterized Satellite Deployer (CSD) (Each Shown in Figure 5-3), allow for a given nanosatellite design to be integrated into almost any currently available launch vehicle, making it much more likely for a given CubeSat system to get launched than a corresponding Microsatellite mission (More on that in Section 5.2.1.3).

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| http://www.nasa.gov/sites/default/files/images/747975main_NLAS_CubeSat_FULL.jpg https://directory.eoportal.org/image/image_gallery?img_id=169985&t=1338091947376 |  |
| http://0.static.wix.com/media/1c8e8f_b5d6e057eccad83ef35dd9bd9797ff63.jpg_512 |  |

**Figure 5-3. (Clockwise from Top Left) NLAS, P-POD, and CSD Nanosatellite Dispensers**

Thus, for a CubeSat mission, the ultimate constraint on its launch vehicle integration is whether or not it can integrate into currently available deployers (And Subsequently Survive Launch). Even though such deployers are similar in principal (In that they allow for the easy integration of CubeSat payloads), each deployer has different restrictions and dimensions associated with its use, as shown in Table 5-1. From this list of deployers, as well as the other constraints listed in this document, one will be selected on which to base the design of the Rascal mission as a whole.

**Table 5-1. CubeSat Deployer Fact Sheet**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Deployer** | **Allowable Sizes** | **Maximum Mass** | **Specifications** | **Extra Integration Requirements** |
| P-POD | 0.5U, 1U, 1.5U, 2U, 3U | 8 kg | *CubeSat Design Specifications, Rev 12* | Separation Springs |
| CSD | 3U, 6U | 12 kg | *Payload Specification for 3U, 6U, and 27U* | Clamp Tabs |
| Wallops | 3U, 6U | 12 kg | *Wallops 6U CubeSat Deployer Specifications* | Separation Springs |
| NLAS | 3U, 6U | 14 kg | Not Available (Though Based on CDS) | Not Available |
| ISIPOD | 1U,2U, 3U | 6 kg | *CubeSat Design Specifications, Rev 12* | Separation Springs |

#### Microsatellite Classification

Microsatellite class spacecraft are those that have a mass between 10 and 100 kg. Beyond this limit, an industry wide definition of what exactly constitutes a microsatellite does not exist. Thus, it is not possible to purchase standard parts for microsatellites in the same manner that can be done for CubeSats, nor do their exist standard specifications that hold true across different launch vehicles, meaning that along with having to be designed for a particular launch vehicle adapter, every microsatellite mission must be designed for a specific launch vehicle, vastly limiting such a mission’s launch opportunities.

However, there do exist two standard microsatellite adapters that are available for use of most microsatellite missions: the Evolved Expendable Launch Vehicle Secondary Payload Adapter (ESPA) ring and the Mark II Lightband system.

The ESPA ring consists, as the name implies, of a ring of six different integration points for various types of spacecraft (An Example of one particular ESPA ring is shown in Figure 5-4). Many different sizes of ESPA rings exist for different sized spacecraft, but the integration bolt hole size, diameter, and arrangement between each ring iteration is constant, meaning that only one method of integration needs to be considered when designing a microsatellite for integration into any ESPA ring.



**Figure 5-4. Example of a Flight Revision ESPA Ring**

However, beyond a standardized bolt pattern, no other standards exist for the type of microsatellite that can be integrated into such a system. This lack of restriction can be both good or bad: good, because it offers much more flexibility in the architecture used to accomplish a given microsatellite mission. Bad because, depending on the restrictions imposed by a given launch vehicle, one particular microsatellite design may be able to integrate into one launch vehicle and not the other; this, in turn, adds developmental risk to any given microsatellite mission that would have to be addressed early in the design phase.

The Lightband Mark II system (Shown in Figure 5-5) is even more limited in its flexibility, only offering the ability to integrate one microsatellite per system. Beyond this limit, integrating into the Lightband system is essentially the same as integrating into the ESPA ring, just with slightly different bolt dimensions.



**Figure 5-5. Example of a Microsatellite Integrated into a Lightband Mark II System**

Beyond these limitations though, recent university microsatellite launches have experienced a relatively large amount of success and have been able to demonstrate both scientifically and practically significant missions that have contributed much to the small satellite community as a whole. Thus, if the resources, time, and money are available, microsatellite missions are worth pursuing.

#### Recent Nanosatellite and Microsatellite Launch Comparisons

In order to compare the feasibility of launching Rascal as either a CubeSat or microsatellite mission, a survey of manifested spacecraft missions over the past three years (2010-2013) was conducted. This was accomplished by recording instances of launches with manifested CubeSat or microsatellite missions and then comparing the number of each type of mission relative to the total number of satellites manifested for said launches. The results of this process are shown in Figure 5-6. When parsing the data, one notices two distinct trends: the number of satellites manifested per launch is increasing rapidly and that CubeSats are the cause of said increase, with CubeSats accounting for 70% of said missions. This indicates that for a given mission, a spacecraft is much more likely to launch if it is of aCubeSat architecture.

This assertion is further supported when limiting the CubeSat and microsatellite missions to those that were developed principally by a student-led university team. When looking at these missions (As Shown in Figure 5-7), the disparity between launched CubeSat and microsatellite missions increases even more, with 86% of launched missions falling under the CubeSat category. Thus, for a given mission, it is significantly more likely for it to be manifested for a launch if it follows the CubeSat, as opposed to microsatellite, architecture.

**Figure 5-6. Comparison of Manifested CubeSat and Microsatellite Missions Per Launch Vehicle from 2010-2013**

**Figure 5-6. Comparison of Manifested University CubeSat and Microsatellite Missions Per Launch Vehicle from 2010-2013**

#### Nanosatellite vs Microsatellite Architecture Selection

Based on the discussion laid out in Sections 5.2.1.1-5.2.1.3, launch is the number one obstacle for the success of any mission, regardless of its scope or complexity. Reasons for this are to a certain extent related to finding integration space on currently available launch vehicles, but more concretely related to finding funding for said integration space. For microsatellite missions, no agency currently exists (Other than the University Nanosatellite Program) that is willing to or able to cover their launch cost, as said costs can approach $1 million per spacecraft. For those microsatellites that do get funding from the University Nanosatellite Program, their post award funding development time often runs up to 3-4 years, as demonstrated by the CUsat and DANDEE missions. Thus, even when a microsatellite manages to find funding for launch, it still manages to have a difficult time to ever actually reach orbit.

For CubeSats, however, the opposite is the case. Both the CubeSat Launch Initiative (CSLI) and the Educational Launch of Nanosatellites (ELaNa) have been funding university nanosatellite missions since 2006. Thus, if a nanosatellite mission is capable of demonstrating relevance to NASA objectives while offering education to university students in space systems engineering, it can guarantee a launch spot on pretty much any currently available launch vehicle. Hence, if a mission is capable of fitting within a CubeSat architecture (Like to Rascal Mission Can, as Discussed in Section 5.2.2), it is in its best interest to do so.

With all of these factors in mind, the first constraint to be imposed on the Rascal mission is that it utilizes a CubeSat architecture.

### Volume

With the discussion in Section 5.2.1 in mind, and a CubeSat architecture selected for the Rascal mission, the next most important constraint on its design is that of volume. This constraints stems both from the necessity to integrate into one of the currently available nanosatellite deployers (As Listed in Table 5-1) and the need to make enough space available to execute the mission as a whole. The former constraint is enforced externally and thus cannot be altered beyond selecting a particular deployer to design the mission around. The latter stems from the volume necessary to contain all of the subsystems of the Rascal spacecraft, as determined by a preliminary analysis of the propellant necessary to execute the mission and a historical understanding of the volume required to contain each of the supporting subsystems of a CubeSat system.

#### Propellant Volume Required

The amount of propellant required to execute the Rascal mission stems from the orbital maneuvers required of it to demonstrate, as described in Section 4.2. Based on these orbital maneuvers, as well as various initial conditions for the relative velocity between the two spacecraft, the relative displacement between each spacecraft for the duration of an orbit can be calculated, as shown in Figure 5-7 and 5-8. As can be seen from each of these figures, two RSO’s will drift quite a ways apart within just one orbit for even small initial relative velocities. However, as can also be noted from these figures, there are certain portions of the orbit where the two RSO’s drift closer together. Thus, it is crucial that the time at which the orbital maneuvers associated with the primary mission are initiated is one that reduces the total ΔV required for the performance of the mission as a whole. Figure 5-9 emphasizes just how important this particular parameter is, with just a 10 second difference in thrust time leading to a total ΔV difference of 20 m/s (Which is fairly large for a CubeSat mission).

Relative Displacement for 50 cm-s Initial Separation.tif

**Figure 5-7. Relative Displacement between Two Resident Space Objects on Each Primary Axis for an Initial Relative Velocity of 50 cm/s**

**Total Relative Displacement for 50 cm-s Separation.tif**

**Figure 5-8. Total Relative Displacement between Two Resident Space Objects for an Initial Relative Velocity of 50 cm/s**

**Delta V Plots.tif**

**Figure 5-9. Total Delta V Required for Execution of Rascal Mission as a Function of the Orbit Time at Which they are Initiated**

With these ΔV ranges in mind, the mass margin of the propellant to the total mass of the spacecraft itself can be found through the use of the standard Rocket Equation, where Isp is the specific thrust of the propellant used in seconds, go is the gravitational constant at the Earth’s surface, mtot is the total combined mass of the propellant and spacecraft, and mprp is the mass of the propellant. If the specific thrust and required ΔV are known, the percent mass of the propellant relative to the total mass of the spacecraft can be found, as shown in Equation (5-2).

(5-1)

(5-2)

With this Equation in mind, one can vary the Isp values associated with the propellants that could potentially be used on small-scale satellite missions with the potential ΔV that the propulsion system must provide. For a preliminary analysis, a low Isp propellant called Refrigerant 134a was selected. Based on previous mission data from the Bandit mission at Washington University and RAMPART, a current RPO mission being developed at Montana State University, 134a can be expected of having a Isp between 20 and 50 seconds. Figure 5-10 shows how changing the Ispbetween this range for different total ΔV requirements affects the mass ratio necessary to achieve mission success. As can be seen, the mass ratio associated with the minimum Isp value for each ΔV case increases as expected, with a notable increase occurring between values of 25 m/s and 50 m/s. Regardless, these values help verify the validity of performing an RPO mission within a CubeSat architecture, given that it makes up a small fraction of the total mass of the CubeSat structure as a whole. However, based on past and current missions that seek to demonstrate RPO, the structure required to contain and manage this amount of propellant will likely take up 1U of space, which makes performing this type of mission on anything smaller than a 3U CubeSat unfeasible, as elaborated upon in Section 5.2.2.2.

**Figure 5-10. Change in Mass Ratio with Propellant Isp**

#### Previous Mission Experience

### Mission Lifetime

A critical component for any proximity operations mission is mission lifetime; specifically the maximum elapsed time during which the mission can be accomplished. Historical data shows that rendezvous missions are typically short or fail, with the best example being Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd’s microsat SNAP-1. SNAP-1 was intended to rendezvous with the Tisinghua-1 microsatellite after deployment from the launch vehicle’s upper stage. Though SNAP-1 carried 600 m/s in delta-V, it was not able to neutralize its velocity relative to Tisinghua-1 before the spacecraft were too far away to rendezvous. Their closest proximity was slightly less than 2000 km roughly 1.5 years after launch.

Orbital analysis corroborates the conclusion that relative velocities must be neutralized quickly after separation for rendezvous to be possible (As Discussed in Section 5.2.2.1). Separation velocities of 5cm/s, 10 cm/s, and 50 cm/s were considered, as well as factors from the low Earth orbit environment such as atmospheric drag and solar radiation pressure. The analysis concluded that a separation velocity greeter than 5 cm/s would result in the two Rascal spacecraft being greater than 1 km apart after just one orbit, meaning that mission timing is crucial in ultimate mission success.

Based on the historical data, the preliminary orbital analysis of the separating spacecraft, and the time that may be required to contact and checkout the spacecraft after deployment form the launch vehicle, a mission lifetime of six months was selected.

### Mission Success Verification

Another crucial constraint imposed upon any spacecraft mission involves actual verification that mission success was met. This can be accomplished through the transmission of relevant science data to the ground over radio, laser communications, or through physical delivery (As Was Done with Film Canisters for Surveillance Satellites back in the 1960’s). In the case of CubeSat missions, radio has been the one and only way of relaying mission data to the ground, meaning that Rascal will likely utilize the same.

Once a means of relaying information to the ground has been established, it is equally important to determine what kind of information is necessary to determine mission success. In the case of Rascal, all that has to be verified is that Jade or Nephrite remain set distances apart or near each other for set periods of time. This implies that each spacecraft must implement a means of collecting and storing relative distance data for downlink upon closing a link with a terrestrial communications station.

### Risk Mitigation

The final constraint to consider in the development of the Rascal mission is that of risk mitigation. As discussed in Section 3.2 and elaborated upon in Section 5.2.2.1, it is very easy for the target and chaser satellites in RPO missions to end up being vast distances apart. This risk is especially pernicious when attempting said missions within a CubeSat architecture, as any mistake involved in planning out the performance of each orbital maneuver, a failure in the operation of the propulsion system, or a glitch in the algorithms used to accomplish all of the mission’s autonomous operations can quickly lead to the development of large separations between the target and the chaser, and ultimately the failure of the mission as a whole.

Thus, it is important to identify risks associated with the development of the Rascal mission early on, as to implement design decisions that ultimately help mitigate their development. A few of these key risks are listed below, as well as the manner in which the Rascal mission will go about addressing them.

#### Chaser Spacecraft Unable to Locate Target Object

As discussed in Section 3.2 and Section 5.2.2.1, vast relative distances can develop between chaser and target objects in very short periods of time. This problem is compounded even more if one decides to go after an object that is already in orbit as opposed to one that is released from the same vehicle.

Thus, one way of alleviating this risk that has been attempted consists of launching both the target and chaser objects form the same spacecraft. However, as discussed in Section 3.2, this has not proven very successful. This is most likely due to the relatively long wait times associated with making first contact with and checking out any given spacecraft, which can take days or weeks. Hence, by the time said checkout is complete, and the mission is ready to begin, the target and chaser objects are already 2,000 km apart and incapable of ever achieving rendezvous ever again.

This problem can be alleviated by kicking both the target and chaser satellite out as a single unit, as opposed to two separate entities. This in turn allows for ground operators to make contact with and check out each satellite at the same time, and upon completing said process, initiate separation and begin the mission from a common starting point, thus reducing the risk associated with the two objects moving too far apart.

Hence, for the Rascal mission, it has been determined that it will consist of two separate spacecraft (Jade and Nephrite) that initially begin the mission attached to each other, as to alleviate the risk of losing the target object to the greatest extent possible.

#### Propulsion System Failure

Though many RPO missions have been developed before, only one has been demonstrated within a CubeSat architecture (SNaP-1). This means that not much flight data exists on the reliability and implementation of CubeSat propulsion systems, which in turn implies that any design work that goes into such a system will have to be rigorously scrutinized and tested. However, due to this lack of historical data, the best practices and margins of safety associated with a “good” CubeSat propulsion system will not be in place, leading to the development of uncertainty in the design and manufacturing of any system that is selected

Since the only means of achieving mission success are through the successful on-orbit operation of the propulsion system that is chosen, it is critical that this risk is accounted for by any means possible. The main method of accomplishing this, beyond conducting thermal, static thrust, vibration, shock, and bake-out testing on any design that is reached, would involve giving said propulsion design two chances to succeed by having each spacecraft utilize said design.

Hence, for the Rascal mission, both Jade and Nephrite will utilize the same propulsion system, as to increase the chances of meeting mission success by giving each satellite the opportunity to conduct the mission.

## Requirements Verification Matrix

| **Requirement** | **Verification Method(s)** | | | | **Rationale** | **Requirement Designation** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Test** | **Analysis** | **Demo** | **Examine** |
| Primary Requirements |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| The mission will be executed by a spacecraft |  |  |  |  | RFP Requirement | RCL-RFP1 |
| The mission must be capable of demonstrating station keeping within a 50 meter sphere of a resident space object for at least 5 orbits | x | x | x |  | RFP Requirement | RCL-RFP2 |
| The mission must be capable of demonstrating a Collision Avoidance maneuver by intentionally increasing the relative distance between it and a relative space object to at least 100 meters within one orbit | x | x | x |  | RFP Requirement | RCL-RFP3 |
| The mission shall be capable of demonstrating rendezvous with by intentionally reducing the distance between it and a resident space object to at most 50 meters for at least 5 orbits | x | x | x |  | RFP Requirement | RCL-RFP4 |
| A method of verifying the successful completion of each mission requirement shall be incorporated into the mission design and mission operations procedures | x | x | x |  | Mission Operations Requirement | RCL-MOP1 |
| The spacecraft mission shall be executed within 6 months of spacecraft launch | x | x | x |  | Mission Operations Requirement | RCL-MOP2 |
| Primary Sub-Requirements |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| The spacecraft must be capable of determining relative distance between it and a resident space object | x | x | x |  | RCL-MOP1 | RCL-MOP1-1 |
| The spacecraft must be capable of recording relative distance between it and a resident space object | x | x | x |  | RCL-MOP1 | RCL-MOP1-2 |
| The spacecraft must be capable of relaying relative distance between it and a resident space object to the ground | x | x | x |  | RCL-MOP1 | RCL-MOP1-3 |
| The spacecraft will utilize a Structures Subsystem | x | x | x | x | RCL-RFP1 | RCL-RFP1-STR |
| The spacecraft will utilize a Propulsion Subsystem | x | x | x | x | RCL-RFP(2-4) | RCL-RFP-PRP |
| The spacecraft will utilize a Power Subsystem | x | x | x | x | RCL-MOP2 | RCL-MOP2-PWR |
| The spacecraft will utilize an Attitude Determination and Control Subsystem | x | x | x | x | RCL-MOP1 | RCL-MOP1-ADC |
| The spacecraft will utilize a Command and Data Handling Subsystem | x | x | x | x | RCL-MOP1 | RCL-MOP1-CDH |
| The spacecraft will utilize a Communications Subsystem | x | x | x | x | RCL-MOP1 | RCL-MOP1-COM |
| Structures Requirements |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| The spacecraft will utilize the CubeSat standard architecture |  |  |  | x | Cost Constraint | RCL-STR-1 |
| The mission will consist of two 3U spacecraft |  |  |  | x | Launch Vehicle Integration Constraint | RCL-STR-2 |
| The two spacecraft must be able to integrate into the same dispenser |  |  | x |  | Risk Reduction | RCL-STR-3 |
| The two spacecraft will be conjoined for integration into dispenser | x |  | x | x | Risk Reduction | RCL-STR-4 |
| The two spacecraft will be capable of separating in orbit | x |  | x |  | RCL-RFP(2-4) | RCL-STR-5 |
| Power Requirements |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| The power subsystem will utilize an Electrical Power System to manager power distribution to each subsystem of the spacecraft |  |  |  | x | RCL-MOP2 | RCL-MOP2-PWR1 |
| The power subsystem will utilize a battery capable of powering each subsystem for the duration of the mission | x | x | x |  |  | RCL-MOP2-PWR2 |
| The power subsystem will utilize solar panels to generate a sufficient amount of power to compensate for the energy consumption of each subsystem of the spacecraft |  |  |  |  |  | RCL-MOP2-PWR3 |
| The ADC subsystem will be capable of autonomously commanding the propulsion system to perform the orbital maneuvers associated with the RFP requirements |  |  |  |  |  | RCL-MOP1-ADC1 |
| Propulsion Requirements |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| The propulsion subsystem will be capable of executing orbital maneuvers issued to it from the ADC subsystem |  |  |  |  |  | RCL-RFP-PRP1 |
| The communication subsystem will utilize a radio for transmitting data to the ground |  |  |  |  |  | RCL-MOP1-COM1 |
| A link budget will be created that ensures that the power level, frequency, and altitudes over which the spacecraft transmits data are sufficient to produce a signal to noise ratio on the ground that is greater than one |  |  |  |  |  | RCL-MOP1-COM2 |
| The Command and Data Handling subsystem will be capable of managing the operation of each subsystem of the spacecraft, as well as the communication of data between said subsystems |  |  |  |  |  | RCL-MOP1-CDH |

## Top Level Requirements

## Structures Requirements

## Power Requirements

## Attitude Determination and Control Requirements

## Propulsion Requirements

## Communication Requirements

## Command and Data Handling Requirements

# System Overview

# Subsystem Overview

## Structure

## Power

The power subsystem is responsible for generating, storing, managing, and distributing the energy required to conduct the Rascal mission. The subsystem consists of batteries, solar arrays, and any circuitry necessary to operate the subsystem.

The spacecraft’s batteries serve as the primary power source. Historically, CubeSats have used lithium-polymer batteries over more traditional nickel-cadmium batteries for energy storage because of the relative light weight and small volume combined with their high energy density of lithium-polymer. CubeSat architecture lithium-polymer batteries are available from commercial vendors at various capacities, with a standard 1U battery holding a 10 watt-hour charge. Many commercially available CubeSat batteries come integrated with an Electrical Power System board.

The Electrical Power System (EPS) serves to manage the power flowing to and from the batteries, connecting to both the spacecraft bus and the solar arrays. The EPS must provide over-current against a short circuit and under-voltage protection to prevent a complete discharge of the batteries. The EPS should also include a number of Battery Charge Regulators (BCRs) that regulate the incoming voltage and current from the solar arrays to the batteries, maximizing the efficiency of the battery charging cycle. The EPS must also be able to relay battery and solar array health data to the Command and Data Handling subsystem.

The spacecraft must be able to generate power to recharge the batteries. While there are several methods of doing this, the most practical is to mount a system of solar arrays to the spacecraft’s exterior. Commercial CubeSat solar arrays can come in a variety of sizes, configurations, and generation capacities. The simplest of the 3U CubeSat-scaled arrays are static panels, though deployable arrays are also available. Though deployable arrays generate significantly more power, it comes at the cost of increased complexity, and thus, risk of failure.

Work to be done before the next review process include refining the power budget for different solar panel array configurations, selecting an EPS and battery capable of handling the voltages associated with the best solar panel configuration derived from this analysis, and then determining the manner in which such systems can be integrated into the Rascal mission as a whole.

## Attitude Determination and Control

## Propulsion

## Communications

## Command and Data Handling

## Ground Operation