Requirements Basics

CSCE 740 - Lecture 4 - 09/02/2015

This Week's Goals

- Understand the requirements problem
  - Why are requirements so important?
- Get a feel for the structure of a requirements document
  - What goes in there?
- Start to learn how to write "good" requirements
  - Clear and testable

Software Requirements

What is a requirement?

A **requirement** is a singular documented physical or functional need that a particular product must be able to perform.

"The software shall be able to calculate the sum of a column of integers."

It is a statement that identifies a necessary attribute, capability, characteristic, or quality of a system for it to have *value and utility to a stakeholder*.

Requirement Specification

A requirement is a high-level statement. The **specification** is a comprehensive technical description of how that requirement will be realized.

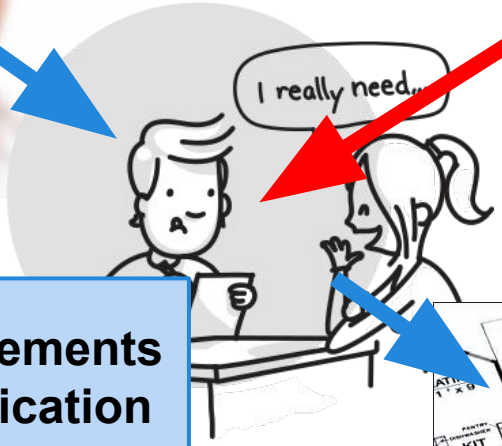
The set of specifications will fully describe what the software will do and how it will be expected to perform.

Specifying Requirements

- Requirements and specifications of those requirements are a description of what the system should do.
- Capture the **what**, not the **how** (that is the design).
- Must be detailed enough to distinguish between the “right” and “wrong” system.

The Importance of Good Requirements

Concept Formation



Most of the problems sneak in here!

Requirements Specification

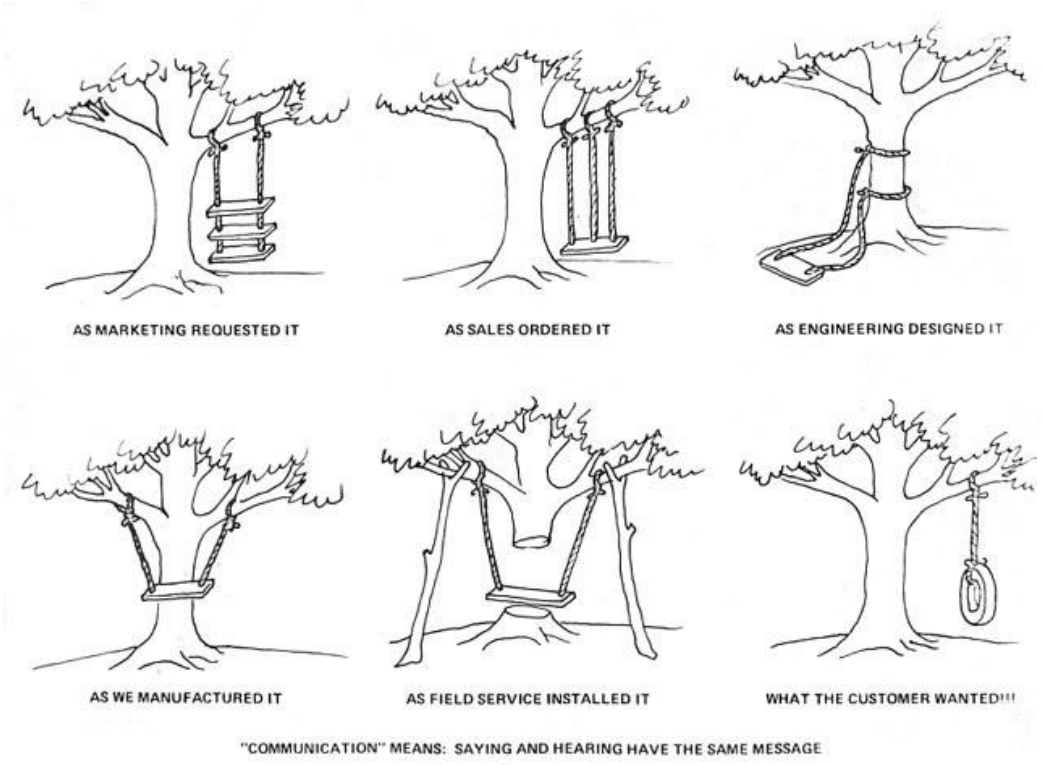
Implementation and Testing

Design

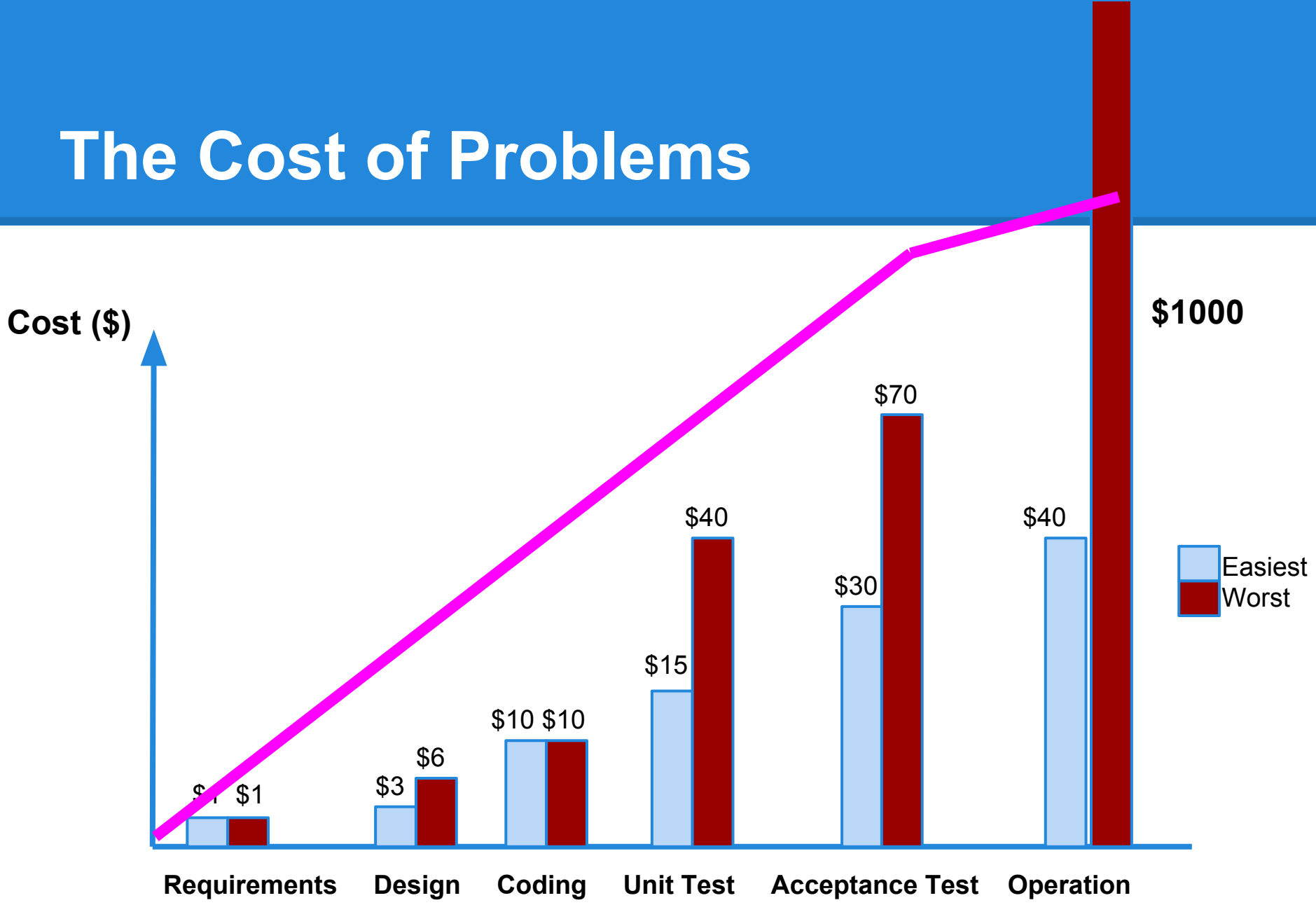
Importance of Requirements

"The single hardest part of building a software system is deciding precisely what to build… No other part of the work so cripples the resulting system if it is done wrong. No other part is more difficult to rectify later."

- Fred Brooks



The Cost of Problems



(From "Extra Time Saves Money", Warren Kuffel)

Importance of Requirements

The Engineering Argument:

- Engineering is about developing solutions to problems. A good solution can only be developed if *engineers understand the problem*.

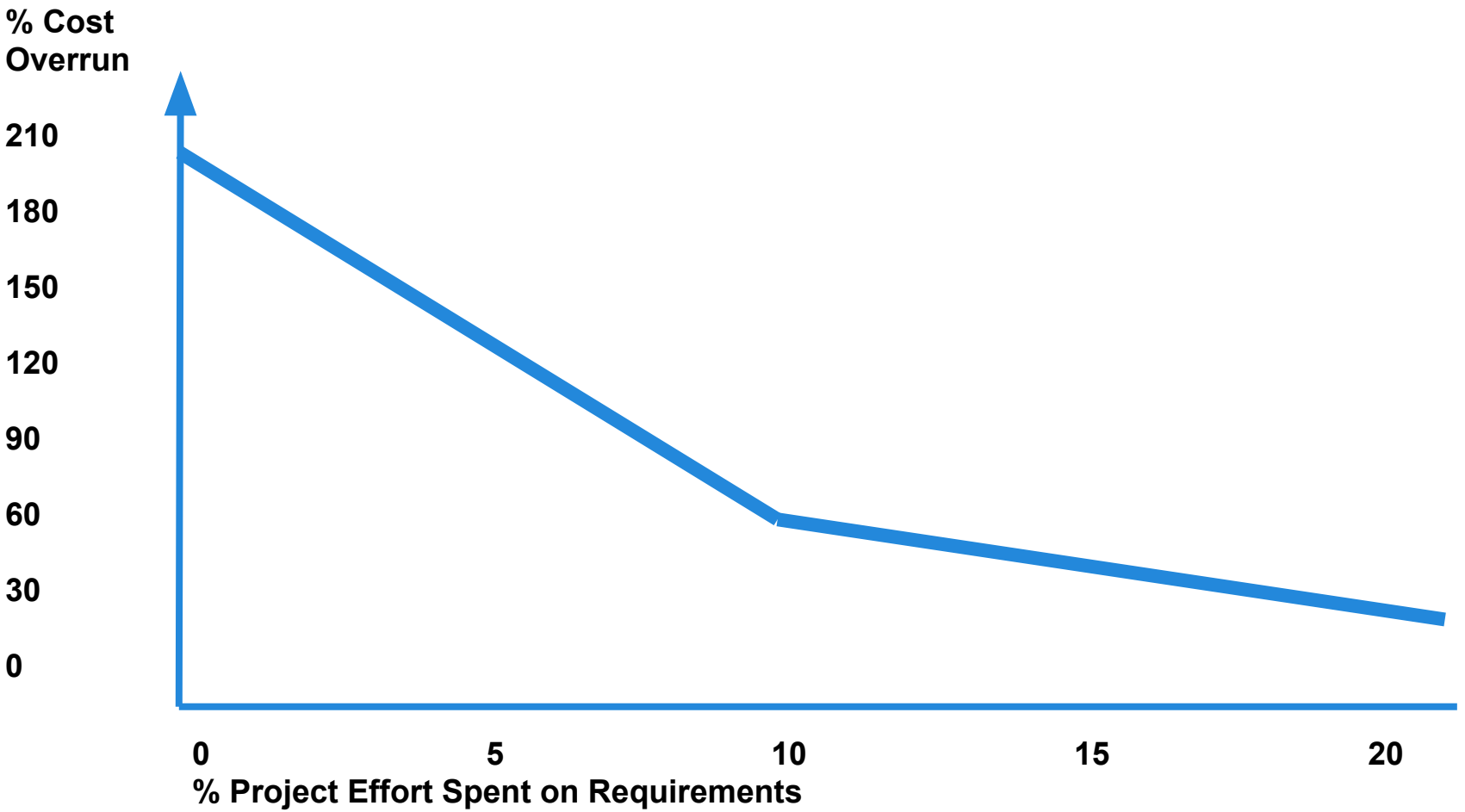
The Economic Argument:

- Errors cost more to correct the longer they go undetected.

The Empirical Argument:

- Failure to understand and manage requirements is the biggest single cause of cost and schedule over-runs

Cost Overruns vs Requirements Effort



(From Werner Gruhl, NASA)

Key Points

- Requirements capture what a proposed system should do, and the constraints they should follow.
- Poor requirements are the source of all evil.
- Requirements problems are the:
  - Most costly
  - Most difficult to correct

Writing Requirements

Writing Requirements

Normal Method:

Natural language statements, supplemented by diagrams and tables.

This is universally understandable, but problems can arise.

Writing Requirements

What are some of the problems with natural language requirements?

- Lack of clarity
  - Precision is difficult without making the document hard to read, and it is hard to write unambiguously.
- Missing details
  - It is easy to forget to include details when using natural language.
- Requirements amalgamation
  - Several different requirements may be expressed together.

Level of Detail

The level of detail of requirements may range from a high-level abstract statement to a detailed mathematical functional specification.

This is inevitable: requirements serve dual functions:

- May be the basis for a bid for a contract
  - Therefore, open to interpretation.
- May be the basis for the contract itself
  - Therefore, must be defined in detail.

Definitions and Specifications

Requirement Definition:

1. The user shall enter their password to access their account.

Requirement Specification:

1. The password shall be at least eight and no more than sixteen symbols long.
2. The password shall contain at least one lower case and one upper case letter.
3. The password form shall be 150 pixels long.
4. … etc.

The Stakeholders

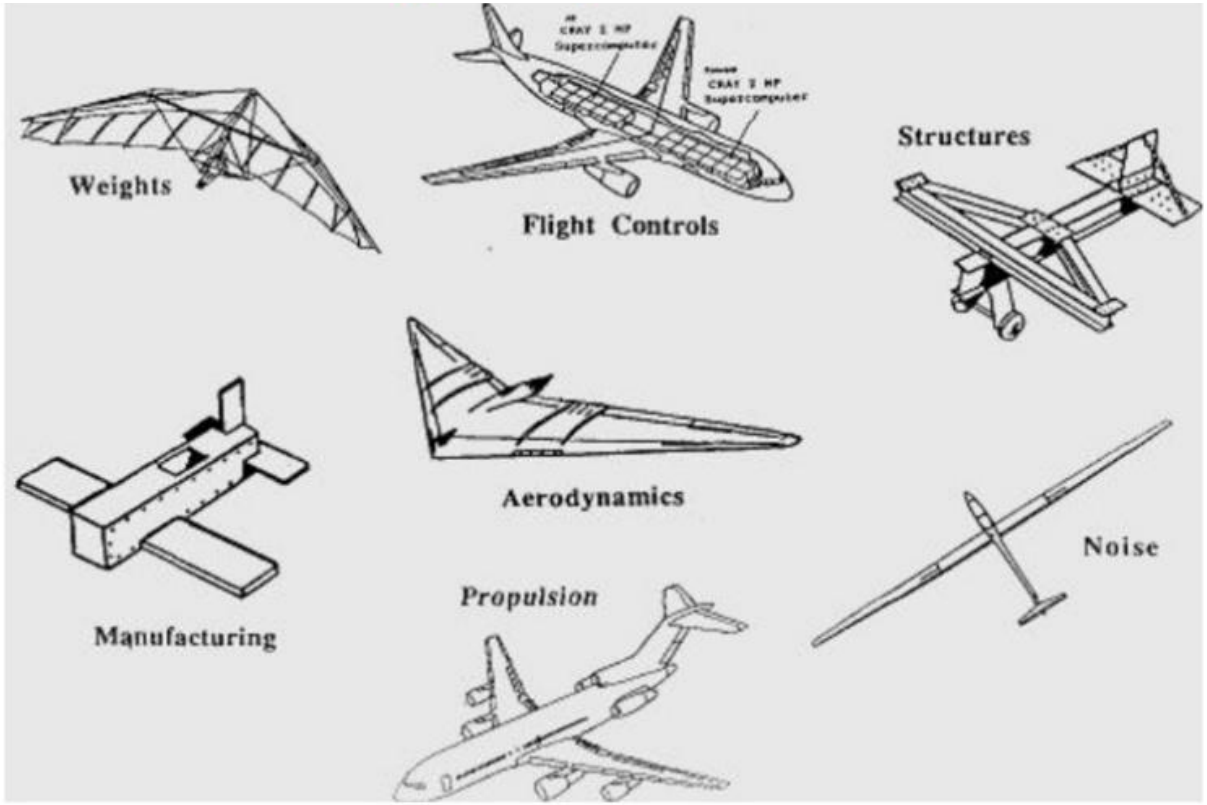
The specification process must involve all stakeholders:

- Clients
- Engineers
- Regulatory Agencies
- Users

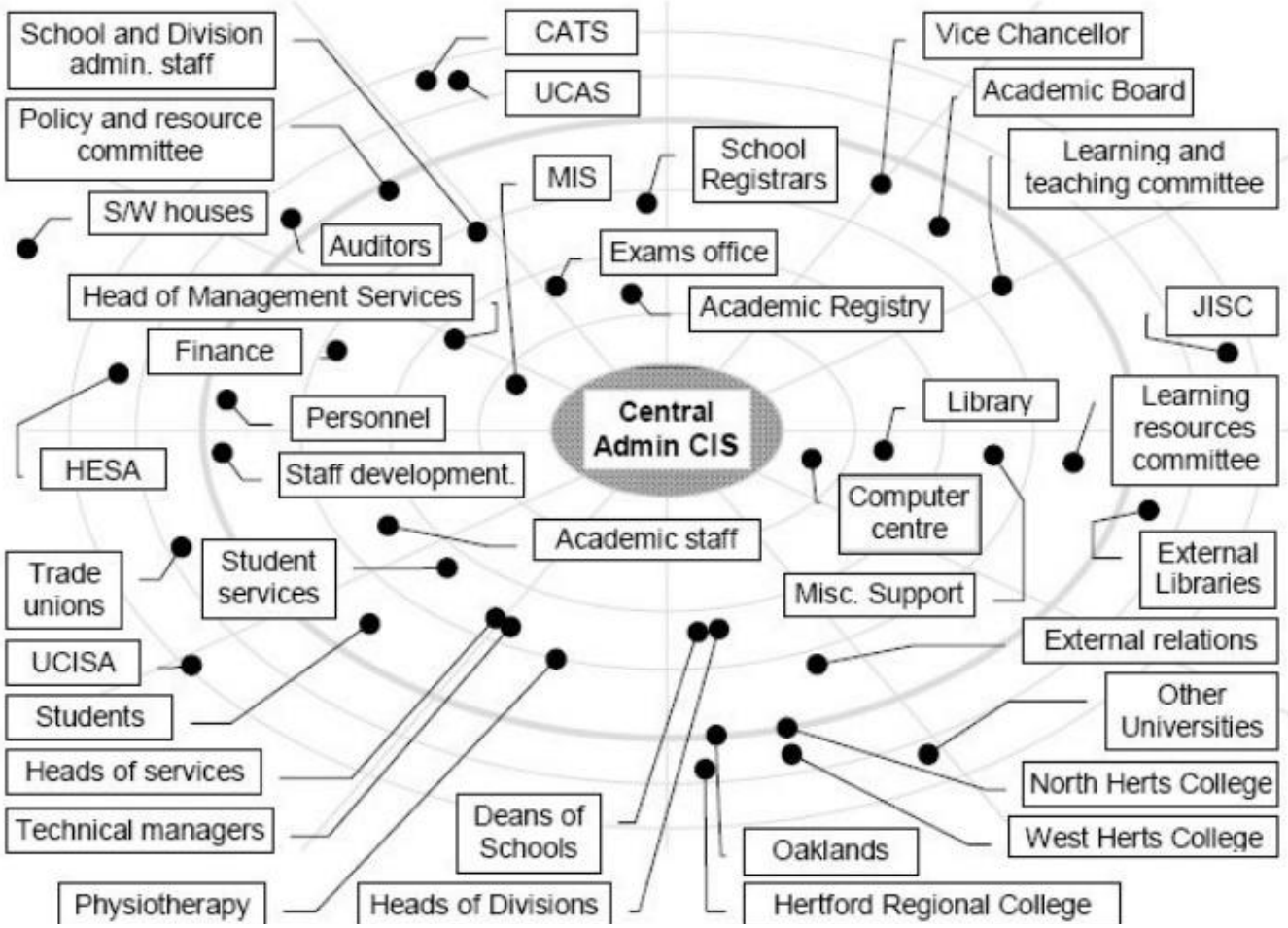
Do all of these want the same thing?

The Stakeholders

One requirement can have many meanings depending on the stakeholder's perspective.



There Can Be Many Stakeholders



Types of Requirements

Requirements can be functional or non-functional:

- Functional requirements describe system services or actions.
- Non-functional requirements are constraints on the system or the development process.

Non-Functional Requirements

- Define system properties and constraints
  - Reliability, response time, storage requirements
  - Constraints on I/O device capability, system representations, etc.
- Process requirements may also be specified
  - Team organization, tool support, programming language, or development method.
- May be more critical than functional requirements.
  - If not met, the system is useless.

Non-Functional Requirements

- Product Requirements
  - Delivered product must behave in a certain manner: speed, reliability, disk space
- Organizational Requirements
  - Consequence of organizational policies and procedures: process, implementation requirements
- External Requirements
  - Arise from factors external to the product and development process: legislative requirements, communication protocols, interoperability standards.

Non-Functional Requirements

What are some examples of non-functional requirements?

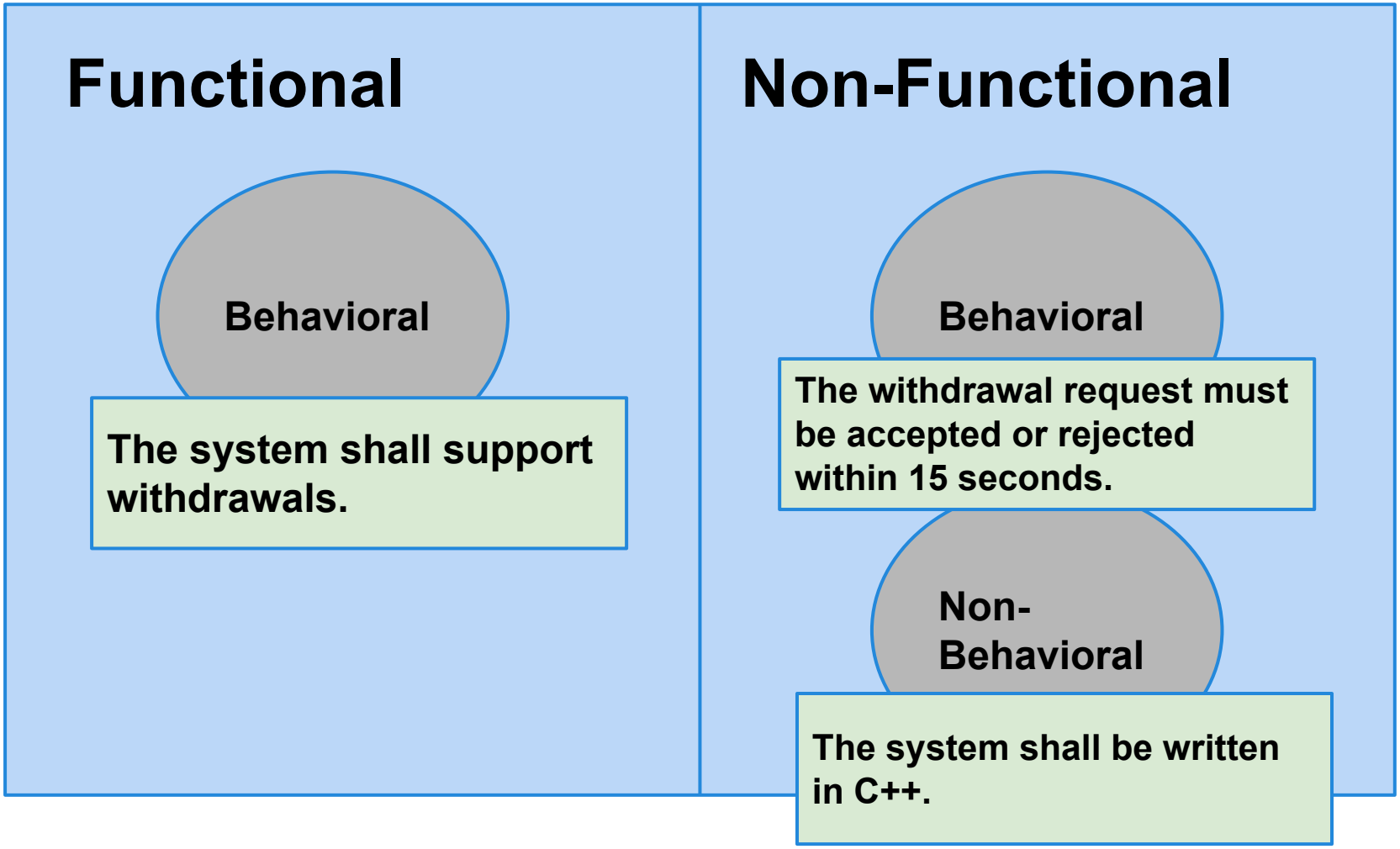
- Product Requirements
  - Withdrawals must be available with no more than 30 minutes of maintenance time per day.
- Organizational Requirements
  - The system development process shall follow the SCRUM model.
- External Requirements
  - The system shall keep a log of transactions in the Microsoft Excel file format.

Types of Requirements

Requirements can also be divided into behavioral or non-behavioral:

- Any requirement, functional or non-functional, that influences how the system executes is "behavioral."
- Non-behavioral requirements are constraints on development (language, IDE, tool support, process, etc.)

Types of Requirements



Capturing Good Requirements

Three common problems:

- Poorly written individual requirements
- Untestable requirements
- Poorly structured requirements documents

Requirements Sample (NASA)

While acting as the bus controller, the C&C MDM CSCI shall set the e, c, w indicators identified in Table 3.2.16-2 for the corresponding RT to "failed" and set the failure status to failed for all RT's on the bus upon detection of transaction errors of selected messages to RTs whose 1553 FDIR is not inhibited in two consecutive processing frames within 100 milliseconds of detection of the second transaction error if: a backup BS is available, the BC has been switched in the last 20 seconds, the SPD card reset capability is inhibited, or the SPD card has been reset in the last 10 major (10 second) frames, and either

1. the transaction errors are from multiple RT's, the current channel has been reset within the last major frame, or
2. the transaction errors are from multiple RT's, the bus channel's reset capability is inhibited, and the current channel has not been reset within the last major frame.

Withdrawal Requirement

2.6: Withdrawal

If the card is accepted, the user has entered the correct PIN, and if there are sufficient funds in the account, the amount of cash shall be dispensed. If the card is invalid (in which case it should be ejected), the PIN does not match the one required for the card (in which case a tone shall sound and the user given the option to try again - the tries shall be limited to 3), or the balance is insufficient (in which case a tone shall sound and the user shall have the opportunity to enter a new amount) cash shall not be dispensed.

Withdrawal Requirement (Take 2)

2.6: The system shall support cash withdrawals by the user.

High-level statement defining what function is being described.

allowed if, and only if:

- The card can be validated (Req 2.7).
- The PIN is valid for the card (Req 2.8).
- The funds in the card account exceed the funds requested

Action to be performed if preconditions are met.

equest.

Conditions necessary to perform the action.

2.6.2: If a withdrawal is a
requested shall be dispensed.

Templates are Essential

- Templates define a standard requirement structure.
- You should establish templates for the requirement descriptions.
  - Ensure readers are familiar with the document.
  - Acts as a checklist so that no sections are forgotten.
  - Makes it easy to find the needed information.

Suggested Template Items

- **Number:** A unique identifier.
- **Use Case:** Which use-case is this requirement linked to.
- **Introduction/Definition:** What is this requirement about?
- **Rationale:** Why does the requirement exist?
- **Source:** Who came up with the requirement?
- **Author:** Who wrote it down?
- **Inputs:** What are the necessary inputs to use this function?
- **Required Function:** What is the requirement?
- **Outputs:** What is output as a result of this function?
- **Related Requirements:** List of relevant requirements?
- **Conflicts:** Are there requirements in conflict with this one?
- **Support Material:** Docs, figures, tables, etc.
- **Test Cases:** How do we test this requirement?
- **Date:** When was this requirement modified last?
- **Priority:** How important is this requirement?

Withdrawal, Using Template (Still Bad)

Introduction: The most common action performed at an ATM is the withdrawal of funds. The ATM must support this functionality.

Rationale: Survey ABC-345 indicates that withdrawals are highly desirable. The success of the product hinges on successful withdrawal of funds.

Inputs: Card number, PIN, requested amount

Description: If the card is accepted, the user has entered the correct PIN, and there are sufficient funds in the account, the amount of cash shall be dispensed. If the card is invalid (in which case it should be ejected), the PIN does not match the one required for the card (in which case a tone shall sound and the user given the option to try again—the tries shall be limited to 3), or the balance is insufficient (in which case a tone shall sound and the user shall have the opportunity to enter a new amount) cash shall not be dispensed.

Outputs: Customer Receipt, Requested Amount of Money, Alarm

Persistent Changes: The Requested Amount will be deducted from the Customer Account.

Withdrawal, Using Template (Better)

Introduction: The most common action performed at an ATM is the withdrawal of funds. The ATM must support this functionality.

Rationale: Survey ABC-345 indicates that withdrawals are highly desirable. The success of the product hinges on successful withdrawal of funds.

Inputs: Card number, PIN, requested amount

Description: The user shall be able to withdraw funds from the ATM

- A withdrawal shall be allowed if and only if:
  - The Card Number can be validated (Req 35)
  - The PIN is valid for the card (Req 45)
  - The funds in the card account exceeds the Requested Amount requested in the withdrawal
- If a withdrawal is allowed, exactly the Requested Amount of money shall be dispensed.

Outputs: Customer Receipt, Requested Amount of Money

Persistent Changes: The Requested Amount will be deducted from the Customer Account.

Related Requirements: 35, 45

The Software Requirements Specification Document

The Requirements Document

- The official statement of what work is required from the system developers.
- Should include both requirement definitions and requirement specifications.
- NOT a design document - as much as possible, this defined what the system will do and not how it will be coded.
- Should also include tests that can show that the requirement was fulfilled.

The Requirements Document

What does the document need to address?

- Functionality
  - What is the software supposed to do?
- External Interfaces
  - How does the software interact with people, the system's hardware, other hardware, and other software?
- Performance
  - What is the speed, availability, response time, recovery time, etc of the software functions?

The Software Requirements Specification

The SRS document needs to address:

- Functionality, External Interfaces, Performance
- Attributes
  - What are the considerations for portability, maintainability, security, etc?
- Design/Implementation Constraints
  - Are there any required standards in effect, implementation language, policies for data management, resource limits, operating environment, etc?

SRS Should NOT Include

What shouldn't go into the SRS?

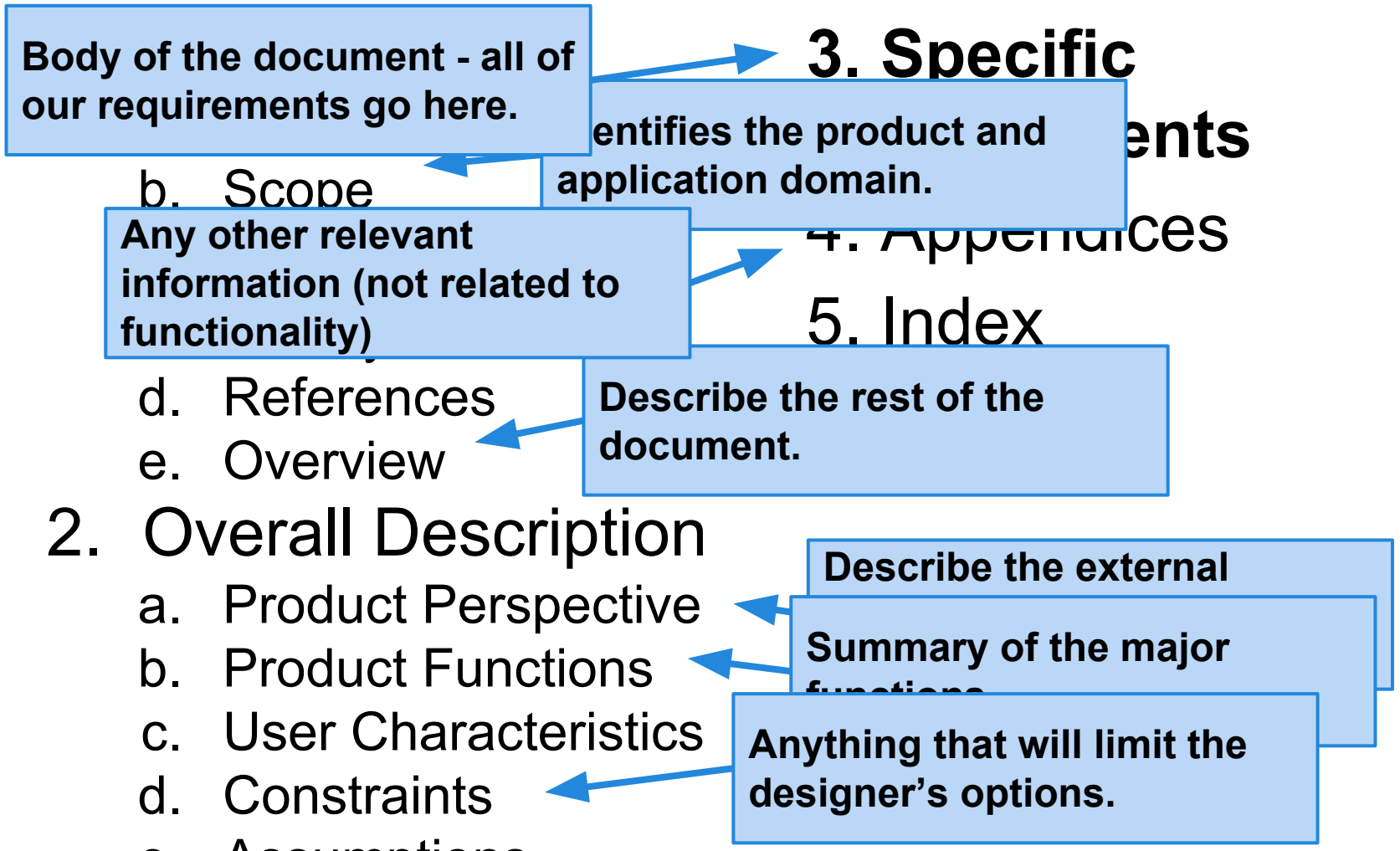
- Project Planning (cost, staffing, schedules, process model, etc.)
  - Unrelated to the functionality of the system.
  - Requirements document should rarely change after completion - project planning continually changes.
- Product Assurance Plans
  - How you will assess quality (test plans, QA process, V&V, CMM)
  - Important considerations, but different audiences, different timelines.

SRS Should NOT Include

What shouldn't go into the SRS?

- Project Planning
- Product Assurance Plans
- Design
  - Requirements should be relatively stable before design commences.
  - Requirements and design have different audiences.
  - Analysis and design are different areas of expertise.
  - **Exception:** Unless there are constraints imposed on the design by the domain.

IEEE Document Structure



“Specific Requirements”

How do we organize the “Specific Requirements” section?

- Should be customized to fit the project.
- IEEE suggests three options.
- Entire document (especially this section) needs to be structured to provide:
  - Understandability
  - Changeability
  - Other “ability” attributes

“Specific Requirements” Outline

- **External Interface Requirements**
  - **User Interfaces**
  - **Hardware Interfaces**
  - **Software Interfaces**
  - **Communication Interfaces**
- Functional Requirements
- Performan
- Design C
- Software
- Other Requirements

Constraints and definitions outlining how your system interacts with other systems and users.

“Specific Requirements” Outline

- External Interface Requirements
- **Functional Requirements**
  - **Three Example Structures**
- Perfo
- Desig
- Softw
- Othe

Option 3: Organized by System Mode

- **Mode 1**
  - **Requirement 1.1**
  - **Requirement 1.2**
  - **…**
  - **Requirement 1.m**
- **Mode 2**
- **….**
- **Mode N**

Key Points

- The structure of the requirements document is of critical importance.
  - Tune to the audience.
  - Use a template to help organize.
    - Customize it to fit your needs
- Individual requirements contain more information than you may think.
  - Use templates to structure and clarify.
  - But, requirement must still be well-written.
    - Precise, avoid amalgamation, make distinction between functional/non-functional

Next Time

- More on writing good, testable requirements.
- Reading: Sommerville, chapter 4

- Assignment 1 is out - draft requirements for the GRADS system (graduation progress tracking system).
- Start planning requirements - we will hold a digital elicitation session on Moodle.