

Press Release – May 2009

## Georgia Tech's DLPE and CEISMC groups awarded NASA Electronic Professional Development Network Grant

The NASA Learning Environments and Research Network (LEARN) Project Office at the NASA Langley Research Center is pleased to announce the selection of Georgia Tech to lead the new NASA Electronic Professional Development Network (ePDN). Distance Learning and Professional Education (DLPE), the Center for Education Integrating Science, Mathematics and Computing (CEISMC) and Orbit Education, Inc, a NASA-themed educational service provider, are teaming together to plan, prepare, produce, deliver and evaluate NASA-related online courses, workshops and experiences for the benefit of STEM educators across the nation. Courses and workshops will be designed to emphasize best practices, incorporating inquiry learning, case-based scenarios, and data analysis actively into the programs. They will also be designed to promote teachers' use of new communication tools such as video sharing, podcasting, visualizations, virtual worlds, and social networking.

The five year \$3M project will utilize NASA products and data for the creation and delivery of professional development opportunities to the STEM community in new ways. "This project will allow Georgia Tech to reach a community of educators, enabling them to better prepare the next generation of engineers and scientists while enhancing their own careers", says Dr. Nelson Baker, Vice Provost for Distance Learning and Professional Education. "In so doing, Georgia Tech DLPE will enable the engagement of a community of learners that is exciting and dynamic and we expect to learn from them as well".

CEISMC, Georgia Tech's K-12 educational outreach center, regularly conducts teacher professional development workshops face-to-face with Georgia teachers. "We are eager to translate these professional learning experiences into an electronic format", says Dr. Marion Usselman, Senior Research Scientist at CEISMC. "This will enable us to reach teachers who otherwise don't have access to STEM professional development, and to help move towards a more environmentally sustainable model where teacher and staff developers aren't required to drive long distances to effectively get together."

Over the years NASA has emphasized education and the creation of high quality educational materials. Anthony Docal, President of Orbit Education, Inc. commented, "Through the ePDN activities we hope to reach a greater number of educators and provide them with deeper content in STEM disciplines. These courses will expose teachers to the unique resources and facilities that NASA has and encourage them to integrate NASA curriculum materials in their classrooms. "

The NASA LEARN Project includes two other activities, the NASA Digital Learning Network™ and the NASA-sponsored Classroom of the Future. "With the addition of the ePDN managed by Georgia Tech, the LEARN Project can continue with its mission to integrate instructional and communication technologies into NASA education and outreach efforts in order to prepare the next generation of engineers and scientists. I am looking forward to working closely with the ePDN team to implement online opportunities that will enhance educators' ability to inspire and equip students with the skills necessary for successful participation in the challenges that lie ahead", says Dr. Robert Starr, NASA LEARN Project Manager.