News Release

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Center for Space Exploration Technology Research Hosts Grand Opening at the College of Engineering

The Center for Space Exploration Technology Research (cSETR) will hold a Grand Opening on September 6, 2012 at the College of Engineering of The University of Texas at El Paso. The Grand Opening will also include a dedication ceremony for the Science, Engineering, Mathematics and Aerospace Academy (SEMAA) Aerospace Educational Laboratory (AEL).

The Center, established through a cooperative agreement with NASA’s University Research Center, conducts research and promotes education in propulsion and energy engineering.

NASA’s Chief Technologist Dr. Mason Peck will keynote the Grand Opening program. Dr. Peck is NASA’s principal advisor and advocate for technology policy and programs.

Since its inception, cSETR has emerged as a national center of excellence for advanced propulsion research and its progress in educating a diverse student population with a strong background and interest in aerospace engineering and science. Students prepared through the Center help NASA meet its commitment to achieve broad based, competitive aerospace research and technology development capabilities among the nation’s Universities. These graduates are critical to meet looming workforce shortages in aerospace engineering and research.

The Center for Space Exploration Technology Research is the result of progressive partnerships with NASA, in particular Johnson Space Center and White Sands Test Facility, the Department of Defense, the Department of Energy and Lockheed Martin. The new Center facilities are part of the recent $22 million dollar renovation in the College of Engineering, which include the Goddard Combustion and Propulsion Research Facility and the Challenger-Columbia Structures and Materials Research Laboratory.
According to Dr. Ahsan Choudhuri, Professor and Chair of Mechanical Engineering, “This Center demonstrates the impact of world class research programs can have in attracting and educating an engineering workforce reflective of the 21st century demographics.” He notes “the Goddard and Challenger-Columbia laboratories are the foundation facilities for a research enterprise that takes us to Tier-One.”

As Professor Choudhuri notes, cSETR research and graduate student participation represents the culmination of an integrated engineering education strategy that begins with K-12 students and their teachers, as typified by the NASA funded Aerospace Educational Laboratory (AEL).

Located between the Goddard and the Lockheed Martin Mechanical Engineering laboratory, the AEL houses state of the art equipment to provide young students and teachers with hands-on experiences that make aerospace engineering and the scientific principles associated with flight and space travel come alive. Stations include a flight simulator, weightlessness testing module and lunar land rover testing. The facility, much like the research laboratories, is a demonstration of the shared commitment of NASA and UTEP to increasing minority participation in aerospace related fields and an understanding that excitement for aerospace needs to be encouraged early in student preparation.

For more information on the Grand Opening of cSETR and SEMAA, contact Nate Robinson at nvrobinson@utep.edu