



NASA GRANTS \$400,000 TO FAMA PROJECT, PARTNERSHIP AMONG TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY AND SMCISD

(San Marcos, TX, September 8, 2015) — NASA's Minority University Research and Education Project (MUREP) has awarded a grant of more than \$400,000 to the Future Aerospace-Engineers and Mathematicians Academy (FAMA) project, a collaborative effort between the LBJ Institute for STEM Education and Research at Texas State University, the San Marcos Consolidated Independent School District (SMCISD), and the Centro Cultural Hispano de San Marcos (Centro).

The FAMA project aims to increase participation and retention of historically underserved and underrepresented students in STEM disciplines, including women and minority groups.

"This opportunity builds on the *Little Engineers* program that we have been running in partnership with Centro for the past three years; we have served over 150 students and learned that San Marcos kids are eager learners and leave our camp seeing themselves as future engineers," said Dr. Araceli Martinez Ortiz, Research Assistant Professor and Director of the LBJ Institute for STEM Education and Research. "We are thankful to NASA for this funding and plan to reach ten times as many students to encourage and further develop their innovation, critical thinking and problem-solving skills."

Programming will begin in the fall of 2015 and continue through spring and summer. The three-year FAMA project is expected to impact over 1,500 elementary and middle school students per year from SMCISD.

"After the first year of the Little Engineers program, you could see the interest growing, not only within the family, but among the student's friends," said Gloria Salazar, Program Coordinator for the Centro Cultural Hispano de San Marcos. "That helps grow the program."

The Centro will provide classroom space to run summer programming, as well as designate a NASA FAMA Computer Lab and Tutoring Center for year round use. The Centro will also host Family Café events to further support and encourage families to engage with STEM learning activities.

"We all know the saying, 'it takes a village to raise a child,' and in essence that is what we're doing here in San Marcos," said Hensley Cone, Director of Secondary Curriculum Instruction and Accountability for SMCISD. "We are coming together to help the students and families of San Marcos."

SMCISD will provide free meals for children participating in the weeklong summer camps during June and July, as well as provide bus transportation to and from four high needs schools in SMCISD. Furthermore, they will provide space for Family STEM Nights, which will be spread throughout the fall and spring semesters. SMCISD will also be encouraging teachers to participate in the NASA STEM Educator Professional Development Collaborative project to further their professional development in teaching STEM-content areas.

"Speaking to the professional development aspect, I love this partnership," said Niki Konecki, Travis Elementary School Principal. "Not only do I know my teachers will have embedded professional development in a great program, and perhaps earn some extra money, but they are continuing to work with our students outside of the classroom."

Additionally, Texas Mathworks, the center for excellence in mathematics education at Texas State University, will extend some scholarships to FAMA students for their participation in Mathworks programs to further support student success in higher-level mathematics and will integrate projects and activities related to NASA into their curriculum and teacher training.



"Not only are we furthering STEM initiatives, but we are partnering with our local district to help students who know us better than anyone else," said Stan Carpenter, dean of the College of Education. "I couldn't be happier or more proud of our college, our university, and of our San Marcos community."

To learn more about the LBJ Institute of STEM Education and Research, visit www.lbj-stem.education.txstate.edu

#

Media Contact:

Cynthia De La Cruz
Outreach Coordinator, College of Education
Texas State University
(512) 245-8504
cdelacruz@txstate.edu