IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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Space Center Houston and TSU to Launch New K-12 Program for Underserved Students

Texas Southern University (TSU) and Space Center Houston (SCH) will partner this fall to debut its new Exploration Academy, exposing hundreds of underserved and minority students in the Houston/Galveston region to the concept of space, the ultimate STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) education model.

Space Center Houston recently teamed up with TSU to expose students enrolled in the university’s K-12 outreach science program to broaden the reach of Exploration Academy beyond regional school districts. Starting this fall, these students will travel to Space Center Houston every Saturday for six weeks to participate in a 30-hour condensed version of the traditional semester-long Exploration Academy program.

“The students in our program don’t live near the Johnson Space Center and have never been exposed to the world of space,” said Dr. Olufisayo Jejelowo, TSU’s director of the NASA University Research Center for Bio-Nanotechnology and Environmental Research (CBER). “Our goal is to help these students understand the importance of STEM education. What better way to help them envision a bright future than by experiencing such a robust and comprehensive educational program as the Exploration Academy. This is a fantastic collaboration that is going to reap tremendous results for our students.”

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Exploration Academy will feature space science educators, NASA scientists and engineers shedding light on earth and space science. The program is open to all Houston/Galveston area school districts. Once a week for an entire semester, students will travel to Space Center Houston in lieu of their traditional science studies to participate in a 90-minute course about space.

Space Center Houston’s Director of Education Dr. Melanie Johnson developed Exploration Academy to ensure that underserved and minority students are exposed to and educated on space science curriculum that is aligned with state educational standards.

“Space is a difficult concept for many students to grasp because it’s not physically here; you can’t touch it,” Johnson said. “Using our immense collection of historic space hardware from flown Mercury, Gemini and Apollo capsules, the Skylab trainer, astronaut flight suits and other resources, we’ve created an educational program that brings space to life for these children and demonstrates the importance of science, technology, engineering and math studies. We’re keeping our fingers crossed that we will be selected as a final home for a flown Orbiter, for it would truly make our program one-of-a-kind and serve as the catalyst to promote understanding and inspiration.”

This partnership was inspired in part by a pilot super Saturday program developed by Dr. Claudette Ligons (Thrust Leader for CBER Workforce Development Thrust), Dr. Marguerite Butler (TMSLAW), Dr. LaKeisha Hamilton-Reed (HISD), Ms. Maria Rodriguez, Ms. Saleen Mitchell, Mr. Bo Washington and Mr. Ramoni Soremekun.