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Dear Educator,

September 3, 2015

We invite you and your students to participate in this year's Near-Space Balloon Competition (NSBC) for middle school and high school students.

In an effort to involve statewide student participation in STEM education and space projects, the NASA North Dakota Space Grant Consortium (NDSGC) is holding its fifth annual student payload competition for its near-space balloon program. The NSBC is an exciting opportunity for students in middle through high school to get involved in a hands-on NASA-sponsored project and experience the complete engineering design process.

High-altitude balloons, such as those launched by NASA and the NDSGC, ascend up to 100,000 feet into the stratosphere, and can carry a variety of payloads that include space science and engineering experiments, imaging systems, and equipment being tested for future space flight. The NSBC plans to launch ten payloads onboard two balloons in **November of 2015**. Groups of 3-20 students in grades 6-12 and at least one faculty mentor may submit proposals for a payload. The qualifying teams will receive up to \$250 of funding to build the payload, in addition to travel funds to attend the launch. Selected groups will also be eligible to win prizes. The Grand Prize winner will win the opportunity to participate in a NDSGC sponsored STEM activity or a trip to the John D. Odegard School of Aerospace Sciences at the University of North Dakota to tour the Aviation facilities including a high altitude chamber, the Space Suit Lab, fly spacecraft simulators, and visit the UND Observatory!

Please find this year's proposal form, including a tentative schedule of events, included with this letter. **Please note that unlike in previous years, the entire competition this year will take place in the Fall (2015).**

We encourage you to copy and distribute the included brochure to interested students and educators, and to visit the NSBC website at http://ndspacegrant.und.edu/index.php/payload_competition for more information, including a video on a previous year's successful competition.

If you have any questions, you may email balloons@ndspacegrant.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marissa Saad".

Marissa Saad
NSBC Project Manager

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The logo for UND Aerospace features the letters "UND" in a green, stylized font with a flame-like graphic behind the "D". To the right, the word "AEROSPACE" is written in a bold, black, italicized sans-serif font. Below this, the words "UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA" are written in a plain, black, sans-serif font.