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**SCIENCE FOUNDATION ARIZONA, PARTNERS LAUNCH NETWORK TO
PROMOTE SCIENCE AND MATH EDUCATION**
Coordinated effort to shape education for the 21st century

(Phoenix, AZ) More than 80 leaders from the nonprofit, corporate, education and government sectors will gather for a first-ever effort on Thursday to bring together and consolidate resources involving science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education in a way that will better prepare students for college and careers and support a strong economy. Considered vital to helping students from kindergarten through college build a 21st century skill set, STEM education is quickly becoming a critical focus for states and nations around the world as the dynamic and fast-paced global economy becomes increasingly competitive.

Building on the state's well-received comprehensive Race to the Top plan, which promoted STEM education, Thursday's meeting, sponsored by Science Foundation Arizona (SFAz), Helios Education Foundation, Research Corporation, Intel and JPMorgan Chase, will center on developing an aggressive and coordinated course of action to implement a STEM action plan statewide. The plan will focus on building a "STEM Network" to increase student achievement and close the achievement gap so students have a better chance at success in careers and in life.

This is the first effort to coordinate STEM education resources and plans in one place in Arizona to ensure all children - regardless of whether they live in rural or metro regions of the state - have access to high-quality science and math education programs, from preschool through college.

"Virtually any career that a young person wants to pursue will require a strong foundation in science and math," said Darcy Renfro, SFAz Vice President and Executive Director of SFAz STEM Initiatives. "Science and math education lays the foundation for success, regardless of which industries they choose."

"A state's quality of life is directly affected by the quality of general and STEM education it offers students," said Jay Labov, Senior Advisor for Education and Communication with the National Academy of Sciences. "Like the rest of the nation, Arizona must step up and find ways to meet and exceed international standards for science and math education, or be left behind in the global marketplace."

Although Arizona is ranked 22nd in a report indicating it has potential to become successful in the "New Economy" (The 2007 State New Economy Index), the state is ranked 37th in terms of classroom computer and Internet use, 30th in scientists and engineers as a percentage of the workforce and 43rd in the nation in percentage of students who head directly to college from high school. Additionally, low-income and minority students are significantly underrepresented in terms of STEM degrees (4% in engineering, math/computer and 2% in science/engineering technology) and the STEM action plan will address these and other issues.

"Now really is the time to make STEM education an integral part of how our educational system

prepares students for success in postsecondary education and in the workforce of the future,” said Paul Luna, President and CEO, Helios Education Foundation. “We know the benefits of a workforce with a high-quality STEM education – more opportunity for workers to find stable, well-paying careers and an attractive and favorable business landscape for industries who will need educated and skilled teams. Our state’s future success will depend on how well we prepare our young people to compete in the global marketplace.”

Following Thursday’s meeting, participants will meet in December and again in March to build a business plan and implementation strategies for the STEM Network.

The event agenda is attached in PDF.

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About Science Foundation Arizona: Science Foundation Arizona (SFaz) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization initiated in 2006 by the Greater Phoenix Leadership Inc., Southern Arizona Leadership Council and the Flagstaff Forty in conjunction with the executive and legislative branches of state government. SFaz serves as a catalyst for high-wage, knowledge-based jobs and economic diversity through administration and strict oversight of research, development and education grants to public education and other non-profit research performing institutions. For more information, visit www.sfaz.org.

