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SwRI, University of New Hampshire Collaborate on New Space Science Department

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SAN ANTONIO and DURHAM, N.H. - Southwest Research Institute and the University of New Hampshire have signed a research collaboration agreement enabling the organizations to augment their areas of expertise and seek opportunities in astrophysics, Earth and ocean science, and larger and more complex space science missions. The agreement goes into effect today, Monday, March 11, 2013.

Jim Burch, vice president of SwRI’s Space Science and Engineering Division, and Harlan Spence, director of UNH’s Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space (EOS), will oversee the collaboration for their respective organizations.

“The collaboration benefits both institutions because it allows SwRI access to a much wider range of science disciplines and allows UNH to benefit from SwRI’s extensive science mission management expertise,” says Burch.

“The combined, complementary expertise of UNH and SwRI will fuel many positive scientific outcomes, one of which will be increased research opportunities for UNH graduate and undergraduate students,” says Spence.

The agreement calls for SwRI to open a new department — the SwRI Earth, Oceans and Space (SwRI-EOS) Department — at UNH’s Durham, N.H., campus, led by Roy Torbert, UNH professor of physics and director of the UNH Space Science Center. SwRI-EOS will lease nearly 2,000 square feet in Morse Hall at UNH, home to EOS and the Space Science Center. Initially, nine UNH engineering and accounting staff members, in addition to Torbert, will join SwRI-EOS; one scientist from SwRI will join the new department. Additional staff members may be added as research opportunities expand.

“This collaboration will allow UNH to expand our involvement into larger and more complex space missions, and SwRI will be able to tap into UNH’s expertise to diversify its program into Earth and ocean science,” says Torbert.

The five-year agreement allows SwRI and UNH to team up on proposals to NASA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, and the National Science Foundation.

“As federal research dollars grow increasingly scarce, this fortuitous collaboration will enhance our competitiveness for major grants,” says Jan Nisbet, senior vice provost for research at UNH. “Additionally, with SwRI now having a base in New England, we plan on jointly pursuing expanded research and commercial opportunities with New England aerospace companies.”
SwRI and UNH previously have teamed on multiple NASA programs. Under the direction of Torbert, UNH’s Space Science Center is currently building the FIELDS instrument suite for NASA’s four-spacecraft Magnetospheric Multiscale mission, which will examine the little-understood phenomenon of magnetic reconnection. SwRI’s Burch serves as principal investigator of the MMS Instrument Suite Science Team, with responsibility for the mission payloads, science operations, and education and public outreach.

For more than 40 years, SwRI has developed spaceflight instrumentation, avionics and electronics for NASA and other government agencies, and has served as the principal investigator institution for multiple NASA missions. Staff members also have worked in multiple research areas, including heliospheric and solar physics, terrestrial and planetary magnetospheres, and planetary system origins and formation.

UNH has a 60-year history in studies ranging from the oceans, the atmosphere, the ionosphere and outward to Earth’s magnetosphere and the local solar system to the outer reaches of the universe. The solar-terrestrial radiation environment and high-energy astrophysics also are active areas of research.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students. Learn more at www.unh.edu.

Southwest Research Institute is an independent, nonprofit, applied engineering and physical sciences research and development organization using multidisciplinary approaches to problem solving. The Institute occupies 1,200 acres in San Antonio, Texas, and provides more than 2 million square feet of laboratories, test facilities, workshops and offices for more than 3,000 employees who perform contract work for industry and government clients. Learn more at www.swri.org.

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