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Project Contact:
Keliann LaConte, 720-974-5835
Professional Development Manager
klaconte@spacescience.org

SSI Primary Media Contact:
Dr. Karly M. Pitman, 720-974-5874
Executive Director
pitman@spacescience.org

The National Science Foundation Funds *Project BUILD*

BOULDER, Colo. May 5, 2017 – The Space Science Institute’s (SSI) National Center for Interactive Learning (NCIL), in partnership with the University of Virginia (UVA) and the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), was awarded a \$1.1 million-dollar grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to develop and implement a 3-year program, called *Project BUILD* (**B**uilding Using an **I**nteractive **L**earning **D**esign). The Project Director is Dr. Paul Dusenbery, Director of NCIL. Co-PI Keliann LaConte (Professional Development Manager, NCIL) and Co-PI Jeannine Finton (Sr. Manager of Pre-College Outreach, ASCE) will help lead the program. Evaluation will be conducted by Education Development Center (EDC) and research will be led by Co-PI Robert Tai (UVA).

This project will advance efforts of the Innovative Technology Experiences for Students and Teachers (ITEST) program at NSF to better understand and promote practices that increase students' motivations and capacities to pursue careers in fields of science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM). The project team will engage youth (grades 2-5), their families, librarians, and professional engineers in an informal learning environment with age-appropriate, technology-rich STEM learning experiences fundamental to the engineering design process. The overarching aim is to better understand how youth’s learning preferences or dispositions relate to their STEM learning experiences. It also seeks to build community members’ capacity to inspire and educate youth about STEM careers.

Building on the success of NCIL’s ground-breaking STAR Library Education Network (*STAR_Net*) program, *Project BUILD* will collaborate with 6 public libraries (3 urban and 3 rural) and their local ASCE Branches. Two libraries have been selected to serve as pilots: High Plains Library District (HPLD) in Colorado and the African-American

Research Library and Cultural Center (AARLCC) in Florida. “After experiencing the *STAR_Net* exhibits on science and health, HPLD is enthusiastic about the opportunity to help design a program focused on engineering,” says Associate Director Elena Rosenfeld. “Because 10.5% of our over 217,000 residents are considered at-risk, we see *Project BUILD*, as an opportunity to introduce families to STEM options they might not have ever considered.” Lisa Jackson, Head of Youth Services at AARLCC, adds that “*Project BUILD* will help our patrons (and our library staff) have greater access to and engagement in STEM topics. It will enable young people in our community to realize that STEM is indeed within their reach.”

About the STAR Library Education Network (*STAR_Net*)

Libraries across the country have been reimagining their community role to strengthen community-based learning and foster critical thinking, problem solving, and engagement in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). Public libraries serve people of all races, ages, and socio-economic backgrounds. They are becoming “on-ramps” to STEM learning by creating environments that welcome newcomers to the community.

STAR_Net (www.starnetlibraries.org) focuses on helping library professionals build their STEM skills by providing “science-technology activities and resources” (STAR) and training to use those resources. It includes a STEM Activity Clearinghouse, blogs, a webinar series, workshops at conferences, and a monthly e-newsletter. Partners include the American Library Association, Association of Rural and Small Libraries, Chief Officers of State Library Agencies, Afterschool Alliance, Cornerstones of Science, and many others.

About the National Center for Interactive Learning

The Space Science Institute’s *National Center for Interactive Learning* (NCIL) is dedicated to developing and implementing world-class projects and initiatives that improve formal and informal STEM education and the evaluation/research foundation on which they are based. NCIL works with national partners to develop STEM exhibitions; conduct professional development; and create educational games and apps.

For more information about NCIL and *STAR_Net*, visit www.nc4il.org and www.starnetlibraries.org.

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