

IDAHO DIGITAL LEARNING ACADEMY AMONG THOSE RECEIVING NEARLY \$1 MILLION FROM NASA GRANT

BOISE – The Idaho Digital Learning Academy joined Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna and astronaut Barbara Morgan to announce Idaho is the recipient of nearly \$1 million in grant funding from NASA to expand the Idaho Science and Aerospace Scholars Program. Out of the 111 nationwide proposals reviewed by NASA, Idaho is one of only 13 states to receive a grant.

“The Idaho Digital Learning Academy (IDLA) is proud to lead a strong partnership of institutions in the development of an interactive, rigorous, online science course in support of the Idaho Science and Aerospace Scholars program,” said Chris Rapp, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Idaho Digital Learning Academy.

In its inaugural year, The Idaho Science and Aerospace Scholars Program is a competitive program that allows Idaho high school juniors to take an engaging online course in science, technology, engineering and mathematics developed by NASA and to compete for the opportunity to work on developing a mission to mars with NASA and Idaho scientists and engineers.



Chris Rapp, IDLA Director of Curriculum & Instruction

“Over 70 students from every region of the state are enrolled in this course through IDLA. This challenging course connects students in their study of science, technology, engineering and mathematics in preparation for the NASA summer academy,” said Rapp.

The Idaho Science and Aerospace Scholars Program is modeled after similar programs in Washington, Virginia and Texas. Idaho is one of the first states without a NASA site to implement such a program.

“This program is a great opportunity for Idaho students. While we provide funding for remediation for students who struggle, we must also provide advanced opportunities for students who excel,” Superintendent Luna said.



Chris Rapp demonstrates online NASA course

“I am really proud of the State Department of Education for leading this effort and grateful to Boise State and all the partnering organizations for their hard work in making this program happen for Idaho students,” said Distinguished Educator in Residence and Astronaut, Barbara Morgan. “NASA recognizes this great work through this grant. This is a great day for our state because we will be able to connect many more of our students to NASA and all the possibilities that science, technology, engineering and mathematics can provide right here in Idaho.”

The State Department of Education funded the pilot year, which began this fall. Seventy-three students are enrolled in the online course, and 44 will be accepted to participate in a weeklong Summer Academy, which takes place partly at Boise State and partly at the NASA Ames Research Center in California. The other 29 students will participate in Capstone Celebrations, daylong academies hosted by Idaho State University, Idaho National Laboratory, University of Idaho and Idaho Air National Guard. With the \$939,457 in NASA grant funding, Idaho will expand the program to 400 students over the next two years.

Kelsey Nelson, a 16-year-old junior at Borah High School, is one of Idaho's first Science and Aerospace Scholars. "This program is giving all of us the opportunity to study subjects that might not be available at our schools," Nelson said. Kelsey added that the Summer Academy will provide hands-on and real-world experience to go along with the things she is learning in the online course.

The State Department of Education has led the development of this program in partnership with Idaho Digital Learning Academy, Boise State University, Discovery Center of Idaho, Micron Foundation, Hewlett-Packard, Idaho National Laboratory and school district administrators. The Idaho Air National Guard, University of Idaho and Idaho State University will also be donating additional time, resources and expertise.