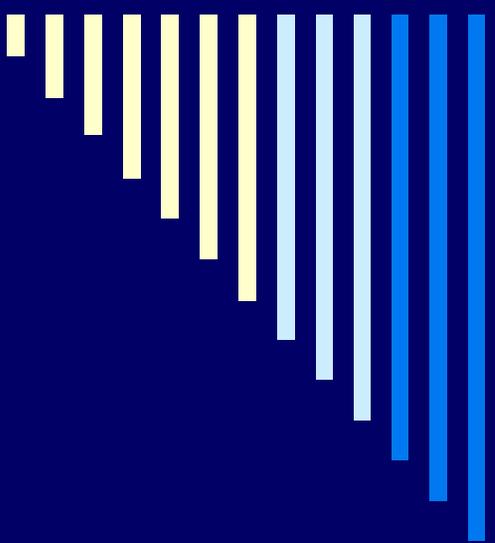


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# Hiring and Placement Practices for Individuals with Disabilities within the STEM Workforce

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**Denna Lambert**

NASA Goddard Space Flight Center  
Equal Opportunity Programs Office





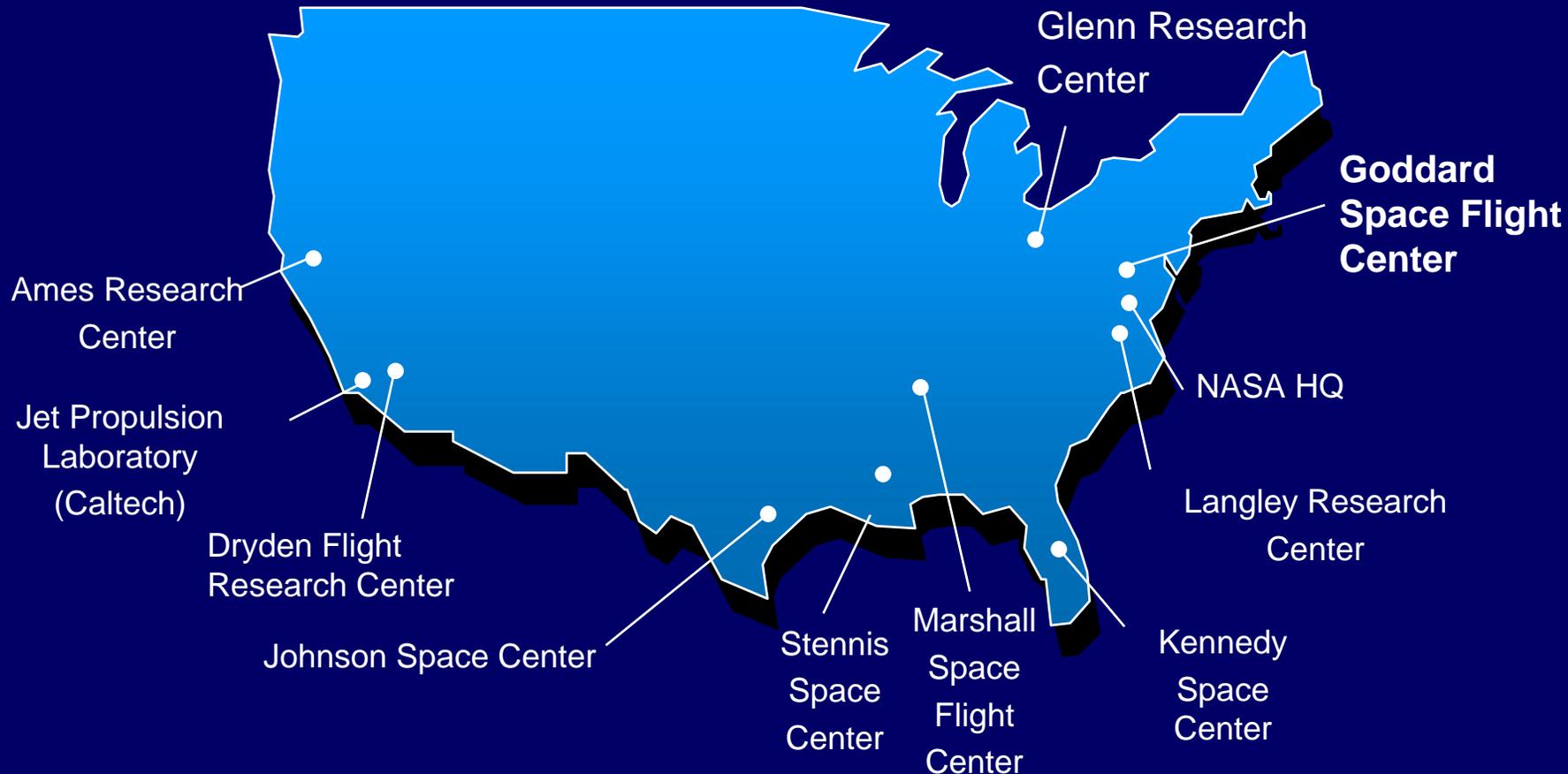
## **The NASA Vision**

To improve life here,  
To extend life to there,  
To find life beyond.

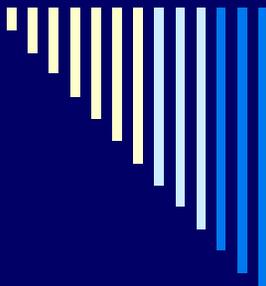
## **The NASA Mission**

To understand and protect our home planet,  
To explore the universe and search for life,  
To inspire the next generation of explorers  
... as only NASA can.

# NASA Field Centers

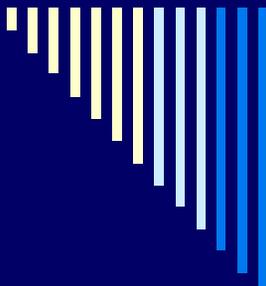


**18,600 civil servants and thousands of contractors in the private sector<sup>3</sup>**



# NASA Skill Competency

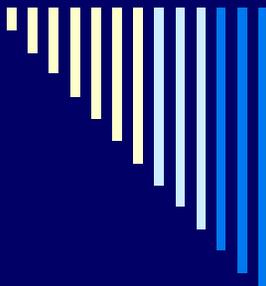
- ❑ **Information Technology:** Computer Science, Computational Scientists, Computer Engineering;
- ❑ **Science and Math:** Applied Optics, Chemistry, Physics, Materials Science, Mathematics;
- ❑ **Business:** Accounting, Business and Public Administration, Economics, Finance, Logistics, Management Information Systems
- ❑ **Engineering:** Aerospace, Architecture, Chemical, Civil, Electrical/Electronic, mechanical, Optical, Reliability, Safety, Micro-Electrical Mechanical Systems (MEMS), Laser Component and Systems Development, Super Conducting Detector Systems Development, Systems Engineering, Optical Systems Development



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# Challenges to Students with Disabilities in STEM Fields.

- ❑ Limited exposure to role models of engineers and scientists with visible disabilities.
- ❑ Lack of a support system for assistive technology and alternative techniques specific to a disability.
- ❑ Lack of encouragement from school personnel when considering technical fields during career exploration.
- ❑ Limited mentoring and professional development relating to a disability.



# NASA's Ideal Pipeline to Employment

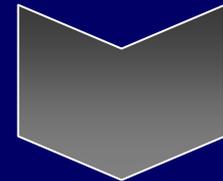
## K-12 Education Programs

Earth Science Camp – Middle School  
Reach for the Stars - Middle School  
Rocket-On - Middle to High School  
Youth Slam - Middle to High School  
STEP-UP - High School



## Transition Programs

High School / High Tech  
EXCEL



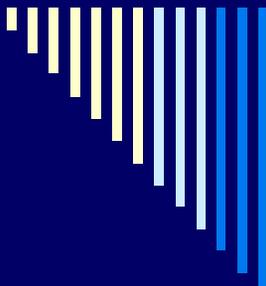
NASA Employment  
Civil Service  
Contractor



## University Programs

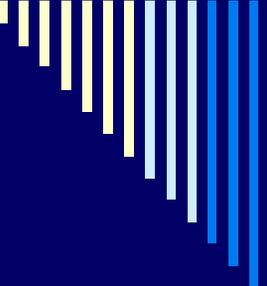
ACCESS  
Workforce Recruitment Program

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# General Program Structure

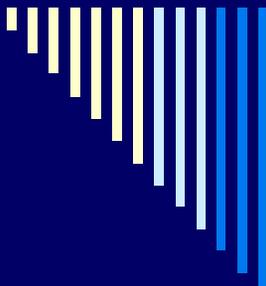
- Student programs range in length between 4 to 10 weeks
- Students are expected to participate in general intern activities (i.e. speakers, presentations)
- Each student is required to present projects to student program managers in preparation for presentation to center manager and outside guests



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# Selection Process

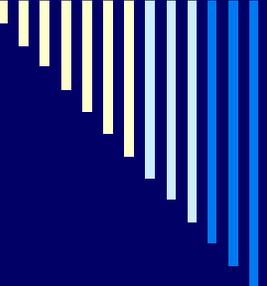
- Each student is selected based on their talent and interest in STEM fields
- Placements are made in collaboration between the student, mentor, program manager, and with input from outside sources (teachers, VR counselors, parents, etc.)
  - Consideration is made for work environment.
  - Accessibility
  - Receptive mentors



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# Learning as a Cohort

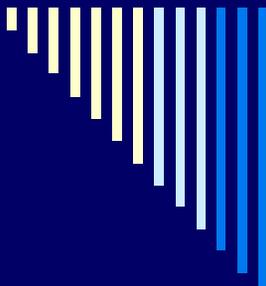
- Students with disabilities participate in bi-weekly seminars on professional development, philosophy relating to disability.
  - Topics Include:
    - Reasonable accommodations
    - Disclosure
    - Attitudes about disability in the workplace
    - Social aspects
- Upper-level students participate as mentors to younger students during activities, launches, and informal communication.



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# Follow-up and Retention

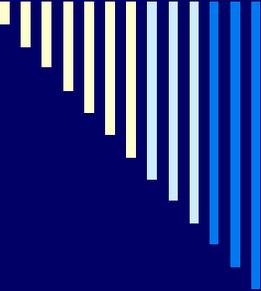
- Students are connected to their NASA Space Grant consortiums, chapter affiliates, other NASA Centers within their region, and alumni email listserv.
- For K-12 students, consultation with school guidance counselors and teachers to maintain an elevated level of enthusiasm for STEM subjects.



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# Collaborative Partnerships

- Relationship created with personnel in human resources, office of education, equal opportunity, local contractor association, and engineering directorates to encourage continue internship and employment opportunities for students with disabilities.
- HR specialist and managers are encouraged to utilize Schedule A Hiring Authorities



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# Helpful Resources

## Internal Resources to NASA

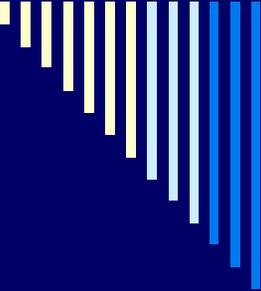
### □ **Centralized Funding for Reasonable Accommodations:**

- Interpreter, Reader, and Scribe Services
- Funding for Assistive Technology not funded through CAP
- Accessible Facilities Management
- Accessible Campus Shuttle

### □ **People with Disabilities Advisory Committee:**

Represents employees with disabilities across the center and agency from various disciplines.

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# Helpful Resources

## **External Resources:**

- Computer Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP)
- Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP)

## **Community Based Organizations:**

- American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)
  - National Federation of the Blind (NFB)
  - University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES)
  - Worcester County Economic Development
  - Maryland Institute for Space Technology
  - Easter Seals of Delaware
  - Maryland Department of Rehabilitation Services
  - Maryland HAWK Corporation
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