

# **Statement on Transition, October 27, 2008**

## **COUNCIL OF INSTITUTIONS UNIVERSITIES SPACE RESEARCH ASSOCIATION**

The Universities Space Research Association (USRA) was created by the National Academy of Sciences in 1969 at the request of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) as an independent, nonprofit consortium of major research universities. USRA now has more than 100 university members that play vital roles in preparing the next generation of space researchers and professionals, as well as in developing and executing the space missions that help shape a positive, peaceful vision for all nations and give our country a competitive edge in a world that is increasingly dependent on space technology.

The member universities of USRA constitute a Council of Institutions (COI), which makes the following observations and recommendations for the transition team of the next President of the United States:

1. A strong NASA is critically important for our nation. NASA should continue to be the leader of the civil space program for the United States and provided with significantly increased funding adequate to meet its responsibility to carry out a balanced space program, including advancing knowledge in the scientific and technology disciplines related to space and aeronautics, as well as carrying out the enterprise of space exploration itself.
2. Research universities are extremely important engines of technological innovation in the United States as acknowledged NASA's support of universities as partners who generate new knowledge, make new discoveries in disciplines related to space and aeronautics, and train the specialized workforce needed to accomplish NASA's missions.
3. The space workforce in the United States is the best in the world, largely because it is led by individuals who have had the benefit of hands-on training with actual space projects during their university years. The number of these crucial hands-on training opportunities at universities has been declining for decades, and that trend must be reversed if the United States is to retain its leadership position in space. Future NASA budgets should specify that at least 1% of NASA's total budget will be devoted to funding competitive opportunities for university missions on sounding rockets, high altitude balloons, remotely piloted vehicles, emerging commercial suborbital flights, and university class space flight missions.
4. Future space research and exploration will be enhanced by the substantial and growing technological capabilities of nations other than the United States. For economic, scientific, and foreign policy reasons, it is vital that barriers to international collaborations by U.S. universities be reduced. In particular, the basic research exclusion in the International Traffic in Arms Regulations should be modified so that it extends to U.S. aerospace firms, Federal laboratories, and non-profit organizations when they are interacting with universities in pursuit of fundamental space research.