REMARKS FOR ADMINISTRATOR BOLDEN

Alabama A&M University Tour

Sept. 16, 2015

Thank you, Dr. (Andrew) Hugine.

It's wonderful to be here. Thank you so much for having me and I look forward to my tour of some of the engineering facilities here at Alabama A&M.

As an Historically Black school, A&M has an important responsibility to this nation -- one it's carried out well since 1875 and which is even more critical today. I know this institution partners with many government agencies in addition to NASA and those partnerships are helping to pave the way for good careers and strengthening our nation. Your 40,000 alumni worldwide are and have been a resource of immense value.

I think most of us can understand how science and technology jobs are going to be the foundation of the future. Not only do they pay well and enable our nation to out-compete the rest of the world, they advance humanity as a whole and provide the inspiration that keeps all of us striving to do and be more.

What's missing, however, in the field are the people of color and women. Certainly the numbers of people from these groups pursuing what we like to call the STEM careers -- for science, technology, engineering and mathematics -- are rising, but there are still far too few, and our nation is missing out on a vital resource.

That's just one reason why it's such a pleasure to be here and see support efforts like the Mentor-Protégé Program.

This important initiative encourages NASA prime contractors to assist eligible protégés -- including Historically Black Colleges and Universities – to enhance their capabilities to take on NASA contracts and subcontracts; foster the establishment of long-term business relationships between the protégé and NASA prime contractors; and help to integrate all small businesses into the competitive base of contractors that pioneer the future of space exploration, scientific discovery and aeronautics research.

Six NASA centers have active Mentor-Protégé agreements: Ames in northern California; Glenn in Cleveland; Goddard in Maryland; Johnson in Texas; Kennedy in Florida and, of course, Marshall right here in Rocket City. The mentors participating in the program receive over $1.7 million in subcontracting credit.

Alabama A&M University itself participated for two years in the Mentor-Protégé Program with Aerojet Rocketdyne, one of NASA's contractors that is supporting our journey to Mars.

Some of the assistance A&M received included student professional development activities such as workshop readiness programs, leadership academy, job search and career education resources, job shadowing, a co-op program, exposure to business and industry cluster organization and business and engineering knowledge transfer.

Alabama A&M also received equipment transfer assistance, including a list of available equipment and machines that could be donated or sold to the university for use by its students.

Now I don't know about you, but I never got anywhere without a little help from others who knew more or who had gone before me. I've spoken often in my career about the mentors who guided me, from my parents and uncles who started me on the path of education and showed by their example what I could accomplish, to the late Dr. Ronald McNair, who encouraged me to apply to the astronaut program and then helped me to survive that rigorous process and eventually fly to space.

I'm a big proponent of that type of exchange and glad that NASA can support it in a formal way.

We're also here today to celebrate the Tech Transfer University initiative, or T2U, which NASA began in 2014.

In this program, the NASA technology transfer offices work with university business schools around the country to teach them about technology transfer opportunities. There are currently about 15 of them, but we're growing that number.

Alabama A&M is in on the ground floor, here in our first semester of the partnership. NASA is working with Dr. Larry McDaniel in the business school on two of his entrepreneurship courses -- one undergraduate class of about 30 people and an MBA class of about 15.

NASA inventors visit the classroom and give the students an overview of a patented technology or technologies. The students spend a few weeks conducting market analysis, suggest commercial applications and write business plans for the technology.

NASA gets new ideas about how to market technology to industry, and the students get hands-on real world experience.

By scaling the program nationwide, NASA is able to reach hundreds of young entrepreneurs around the country and help spread the word that the federal government, specifically NASA, has technologies available to help solve their technical challenges and encourage their innovation.

As a bonus, NASA has been seeing students form start-up companies to pursue commercialization of the technologies on which they've worked.

We like to say that technology drives exploration, and here is a prime, real world example.

From NASA's commercial crew and cargo efforts, down to the new technologies that are going to take us to Mars, power the next great airliner, or gather crucial data about our planet and its changes, we've always known that exploration fuels good jobs, supports entrepreneurs and bolsters the innovation that is the backbone of this nation.

I'm happy to see so much of that in action right here in Huntsville and especially at Alabama A&M. At Marshall, the engines and technologies of our missions have been rumbling for decades, but it's truly gratifying to see the excitement of exploration spreading to the local community and indeed across the nation.

Keep up the good work, A&M. The future is just beginning!