

UNT teams up with NASA for new mission

Wednesday, November 16, 2016 - 09:23

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DENTON, Texas (UNT) – A new partnership with NASA has the University of North Texas aimed at getting students excited about space science.

UNT's [Institute for the Integration of Technology into Teaching and Learning](#), IITTL, established a five- year partnership with [NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center](#) and the [Heliophysics Education Consortium](#).

“The goal is to take the passion the NASA scientists have and figure out a way to share it with kids in a fun, inspiring way,” said Troy Cline, NASA's education technology coordinator. “Getting those kids excited about space and science really is our life's work.”

They hope to get the schools, science centers, museums and libraries excited by giving them access to technology-enhanced, hands-on space science activities. Cline showed off some of those activities when he was at UNT's Discovery Park recently for an open house that introduced the new partnership.

“We had the idea about the Heliophysics Education Consortium at NASA, but we really needed a higher education partner,” said Cline. “I've known about UNT professor Gerald Knezek's leading edge work for years, so I instantly thought we should work together.”

The program has helped create a science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or STEM, innovation lab at Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland. The lab is complete with learning stations that use fun programs including virtual reality, magnetic art and green screens. The program will also bring opportunities and events to



Open House guests seeing NASA program in virtual reality
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Troy Cline of NASA speaking at open house at UNT's Discovery Park
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the area around UNT. The first of those events will be held in February with a Saturday learning camp at UNT for students from the Sanger school district. Camps will also be held at the Dallas Arboretum next summer.

“We want to see if the kids will learn better and get more motivated for STEM careers and specifically if NASA can have an impact on that,” said Rhonda Christensen, a research scientist in the [Learning Technologies Department](#) of the UNT [College of Information](#). “This is a real opportunity to reach kids for STEM.”

UNT researchers will also be testing and refining the products and programs that go into the Goddard Innovation lab. Additionally, they’ll be using their proven system to determine if this program really does have an impact on student interest in STEM and space science careers.

“We have a unique opportunity,” said Cline. “If we can instill a passion into these kids, then they will do the rest.”

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