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Moon Digging Contest Hits Groundbreaking Number of Teams in Quest for NASA's \$750,000

Pasadena, (June 18, 2008) - After reaching the closing deadline for team registration this week, the California Space Education and Workforce Institute (CSEWI) hit a groundbreaking number of entrants--25 teams--for the upcoming 2008 Regolith Excavation Challenge involving a NASA winning purse of \$750,000, scheduled to take place on Saturday, August 2, 2008 at California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo. The competition requires teams to build a roving lunar excavator that can autonomously "navigate, excavate, and transfer 150 kg of simulated lunar regolith" into a collector bin with 30 minutes, and is part of NASA's Centennial Challenges that seeks to drive progress in aerospace technology of NASA's missions through non-traditional sources by opening it up to public competition.

The majority of the teams represent the private sector, while four of them are affiliated with universities. Several of the teams have backgrounds that are not traditionally associated with the aerospace industry, such as the toy industry, IT, while several do have an aerospace background. The rules for this year are much more demanding than the 2007 competition, with triple the prize dollars to match. Excavators have to autonomously navigate, avoid obstacles, and excavate more than double their mass of regolith in order to win. In addition, the teams are required to use less power than an XBOX 360 or a Playstation 3 video game console. Each team has just one chance at the prize All four teams who participated last year are returning.

Teams registered this year are the following:

Technology Ranch	Arroyo Grande, CA
William B. Cushman, Ph.D.	Pensacola FL
Toy Garden Inc.	Friday Harbor, WA
Boppers	Huntington Beach, CA
UBC TREAD Robotics	The Woodlands, TX
Green Cheese Solutions	Hudson, WI
Lunaccretion	Westminster, CO
Team of One	Berkley, MI
Terra Engineering	Rancho Palos Verdes, CA
Team Terrich	North Kansas City, MO
Lunar Miners	Rolla, MO
Ajax Laboratories, LLC	Victor, NY
Kingfish Tech	East Peoria, IL
LREX ONE	Littleton, CO
Mocha Boca II	East Peoria IL
Sandstorm	North Royalton, OH
Dig-It	Honolulu, HI
LunOREDIGGERS	Golden, CO
Full Scale Robotics Inc.	Port St. Lucie FL
Cal Poly / Slobotics	San Luis Obispo, CA
Team Waldbaum	Sunnyvale, CA
Next Step Robotics	Houston, TX
Paul's Robotics	Worcester, MA
McGill LunarEx Team	Cincinnati, OH
Lunar Arc	Irvine, CA

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Selected to serve as an Allied Organization by the NASA Centennial Challenges Program, the California Space Education and Workforce Institute (CSEWI) administers the Regolith Excavation Challenge. The Regolith Excavation Challenge is Co-Hosted by the California Space Authority (CSA) and the California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo College of Engineering. The event is sponsored by Diani Building Corporation, Empirical Systems Aerospace, and the California Business Transportation and Housing Agency. The event promotes the development of new technologies to excavate lunar regolith. Prize funding is provided by the NASA Centennial Challenges Program.

Excavation is a necessary first step towards lunar resource utilization, and the unique physical properties of lunar regolith make excavation a difficult technical challenge. Advances in lunar regolith excavation have the potential to contribute significantly to the nation's space exploration operations.

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