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For Immediate Release

Teachers Take to the Sky, Gaining Astronomy and Science Training to Fuel Interactive Learning

Science Foundation Arizona supports educators from schools across Arizona to take part in an innovative science and math professional development training

Oracle, AZ – October 23, 2009 – Teachers from Chinle, Kingman, Tucson, St. Johns, Kayenta and metro Phoenix will assemble this week at the University of Arizona’s B2 Institute to participate in a hands-on teaching enrichment program designed to enhance the critical science and math skills of Arizona students thanks to a new STEM program from Science Foundation Arizona. STEM is the acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

Supported by Science Foundation, the Arizona Center for STEM Teachers (ACST) Fall Training Institute will kick off its three-day workshop, titled “At the Speed of Light,” on October 23rd. Utilizing a simple yet powerful “Galileoscope” a low-cost telescope being utilized in Arizona schools and across the country, teachers will learn new, interactive curriculum incorporating optics, refraction, laser technologies, and solar power to infuse in their classrooms.

This year marks the “International Year of Astronomy,” and the affordability of the Galieoscope at under \$15 each is offering Arizona teachers and their students the opportunity to become electrified by seeing the Milky Way and Neptune for the first time and then incorporate that discovery through newly honed teaching methods and curriculum.

Since 2006, Science Foundation’s K-12 education programs have helped educate over 54,000 students in critical science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) excellence. This learning helps build 21st century skills necessary for a globally competitive Arizona economy.

“I don’t know of anybody who isn’t fascinated by the night sky and the stars, and this fascination can be exploited to great benefits in STEM education, from the kindergarten to high school and beyond,” said William C. Harris, President and CEO of Science Foundation Arizona. “We are pleased to see innovation methods of professional development for teachers that will enable them to more actively engage students .”

“Finding ways to get students to connect STEM subjects with day-to-day life – in this case, the night sky – is one of the most effective methods of helping them build their critical thinking skills,” said Darcy Renfro, executive director of Science Foundation Arizona STEM Education Initiative (SFaz-STEM).

“Optics and astronomy play such prominent roles in Arizona, from the high-tech industries of ‘Optics Valley’ to our leadership in developing and hosting some of the most powerful telescopes and observatories in the world,” said Pierre Meystre, Director of the B2 Institute. “Involving STEM

teachers in these world-class initiatives and engaging the help of some of the greatest experts in providing them with material support and scientific content provides us with unique and exciting opportunities.”

ACST hosts on-going training sessions for instructors statewide, in an effort to bring more STEM education into Arizona classrooms.

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About Science Foundation Arizona: Science Foundation Arizona (SFAz) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization initiated in 2006 by the Greater Phoenix Leadership Inc., Southern Arizona Leadership Council and the Flagstaff Forty with the goal to build and strengthen the scientific and education infrastructure in areas of greatest strategic importance to Arizona’s competitiveness in the global economy. These areas comprise advanced communications, biomedicine and sustainable systems that include renewable energies. The state has appropriated monies through the Arizona 21st Century Competitive Initiative Fund and these grants, totaling \$60 million in the first two years, leveraged an additional \$109.8 million in outside capital. SFAz continues to accelerate Arizona's students’ competency and excellence in STEM education and has to date impacted 54,000 students statewide. SFAz serves as a facilitating bridge between industry and education that ensures a highly skilled Arizona work force as the foundation for a 21st century knowledge-based, global economy. Founding executive leadership groups are funding operating costs for SFAz through 2012, enabling public and philanthropic funds to be directly applied to foundation initiatives. For more information, visit www.sfaz.org