NASA’s Space Grant projects inspire students, teachers

By Linda Hartridge
Staff Writer

College students and their instructors will soon participate in exciting and educational research and development opportunities through NASA’s new Space Grant Student Project and Space Grant Faculty Project. The agency’s Exploration Systems mission directorate oversees both projects.

Dr. Lesley Gainer, who manages the projects for the agency at Kennedy Space Center, said they support NASA’s education framework by contributing to the development of the science, technology, engineering and mathematics workforce.

The goal is to establish a close relationship between NASA’s centers and the National Space Grant Consortia, also known as Space Grant, and increase the collaboration between NASA and the academic community that contributes to the agency’s objectives.

“Students are exposed to systems engineering in real-world settings through internships and senior design projects,” Gainer said.

Gainer is a higher-education program specialist in the education programs and university research divisions of the External Relations directorate at KSC.

For the Faculty Project, Gainer and her peers worked to select five faculty members from 20 universities and five states. The winners were chosen from the 10 institutions chosen by NASA for their contributions to the agency’s mission.

They are selected because they bring innovative ideas to the table and are able to work with other faculty members to develop their own projects.

At KSC, the Exploration Systems Space Grant Faculty participants are Dr. Jose Grandas, a professor in mechanical engineering at California State University, Long Beach.

Grandas met with representatives from the Launch Services Program, the Life Sciences Division, Applied Technology, Constellation Project Office, Engineering Development, environmental, guidance and control systems, and many others to discuss their mission and senior project needs.

The directorate’s internships and senior design projects for 2008 will be available to view at http://education.ksc.nasa.gov/ESMDspacegrant.