

Administrator unveils future NASA vision and a renewed journey of learning

In his first major address since being sworn into office, NASA Administrator Sean O'Keefe recently outlined his strategic vision for the Agency's future, including a component designed to inspire and educate a new generation of explorers and scientists.

The Administrator shared his vision of NASA's future in a speech at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs on April 12, located on the campus of Syracuse University. O'Keefe was joined by U.S. Rep. Sherwood L. Boehlert, who oversees the Agency as Chairman of the House Science Committee, and U.S. Rep. James T. Walsh, who heads the House subcommittee that supervises NASA's budget.

"The nation faces extraordinary new challenges. The world is changing, and if NASA is going to exploit these new opportunities then America's space program must also change," O'Keefe said. "Our future decisions will be science-driven, not destination-driven. The investments we make today must be justified by their contributions to the long-range goals of the Agency."

In his speech, titled "Pioneering the Future," O'Keefe spelled out NASA's vision and mission.

The new NASA vision for the future is:

*To improve life here,
To extend life to there,
To find life beyond.*

The NASA mission is:

*To understand and protect our home planet
To explore the Universe and search for life
To inspire the next generation of explorers
...as only NASA can.*



**NASA Administrator
Sean O'Keefe**

He also outlined the importance of inspiring a new generation of explorers through education. "Education is part of our core mission," O'Keefe said.

In an effort to take students on a new journey of learning, the Administrator unveiled plans for a new type of space explorer – an Educator Mission Specialist. Shortly after completion of the core elements of the International Space Station in 2004, NASA will send Astronaut Barbara Morgan, the agency's first Educator Mission Specialist, into space.

Morgan was selected as the backup candidate in 1985 for the Teacher in Space program. She trained side-by-side with Christa McAuliffe and the Challenger crew at the NASA Johnson Space Center in Houston. The Teacher in Space program ended when Challenger exploded Jan. 28, 1986, killing McAuliffe and her six crewmates.

"The time has come for NASA to complete the mission – to send an educator to space to inspire and teach our young people," O'Keefe said. "Working in partnership with Education Secretary Rod Paige, we will make Barbara's flight the first in a series of missions in the new Educator in Space program."

O'Keefe said it is fitting that Morgan complete the mission of STS-51L. "For the past 16 years, Barbara has worked with NASA and countless science organizations, keeping alive Christa McAuliffe's inspiration. She is uniquely qualified to take our students on a journey of education that only NASA could make possible."

The new vision for the Agency builds on NASA's unique capabilities as the nation's premiere aeronautics and aerospace organization. "The biggest difference is that we will let specific science objectives tell us where to go," O'Keefe said. "NASA's mission of discovery will be carried out with a new commitment to fiscal responsibility and the synergy that comes from working with other government agencies, private industry and academia."

The complete text of the Administrator's address and additional supporting material are available on the Internet at:

http://www.nasa.gov/bios/speeches_2002.html ❖

'There's no endpoint to education'

By Melissa Davis

It was Barbara Morgan's moment in the spotlight. The previous week NASA Administrator Sean O'Keefe had announced plans that she would be the Agency's first educator mission specialist. Her time had come and the media had gathered to hear her story.

Yet, she turned that spotlight on the profession she holds dear to her heart.

"The job of education is never done. It always should be a major focus in this country," she said. "It is the key to the future."

People have told Morgan they believe that her going to space will finally fulfill Christa McAuliffe's mission. Morgan disagrees.

"It's not that I will be fulfilling Christa's mission but helping to carry it on," she said, "just as so many people have for so many years across the country through the Challenger centers, through the activities that they do in the classroom – just being dedicated classroom teachers who are enthusiastic about students and what they're learning and their future."

She went on to say: "The job of education is never fulfilled. Every year you have a new group of students and you have a new generation coming in. So, there's no endpoint to education, just like there's no endpoint to the universe and the kinds of things NASA is doing to explore that universe." ❖



NASA JSC 2002-E-13485 Photo by Robert Markowitz

Astronaut Barbara Morgan and NASA Administrator Sean O'Keefe took part in a press briefing on April 16 at JSC. On April 12, O'Keefe announced Morgan would fly on a Space Shuttle mission to the International Space Station shortly after the completion of the core elements of the orbiting outpost in 2004.

Additional information about Barbara Morgan is online at:
<http://www.jsc.nasa.gov/Bios/htmlbios/morgan.html>