



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Building Strategic Alliances between Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs) and Small & Disadvantaged Businesses (SDBs)

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The Science and Engineering Alliance (SEA) Office of the Executive Director (OED) has pursued a successful course of institutional advocacy and federal agency coordination on behalf of its member institutions, with a focus on basic research, training and student/faculty development. The SEA is a Washington DC-based consortium of four state-supported universities and a national laboratory. As the frequency of contacts and requests for technology development assistance by Small Disadvantaged Businesses (SDBs) increased at member institutions, it became apparent that a significant disconnect existed between basic research capability and technology transfer/commercialization capacity on member campuses.

In 1998, SEA initiated discussions with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Office of Technology, to explore the potential for the SEA to collaborate with SBA and other federal R&D agencies that experienced similar challenges with their Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer Research (STTR) Programs. Not only was there low participation in SBIR/STTR programs by SDB and HBCUs, but such is also the case with all categories of small businesses in a number of states.

SEA consummated a Co-sponsorship Agreement with SBA, Department of Defense/Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the Minority Business Enterprise Legal Defense and Education Fund (MBELDEF) in September 1998, with a project start date of October 1, 1999. Under this initiative, SEA agreed to implement a national multimedia campaign, training, technical assistance, and seminar series aimed at increasing the number of

SDBs and HBCUs participating in the federal government's \$1 billion dollar SBIR/STTR research and development programs.

According to Dr. Robert L. Shepard, SEA founding executive director of the SEA, "the co-sponsors view this initiative as a catalysis to spur both new research at the HBCU academic institutions and forge new partnerships to enhance business development within the local community." "I am really excited about the potential for contributing to the economic development in the regions where our member institutions are located, i.e., Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas. With the potential impact this outreach effort could have on the HBCU and SDB communities, our seminars and workshops should be standing-room-only," said Shepard.

Shepard also noted that "historically, HBCUs and SDBs have not benefited from the federal SBIR/STTR Programs. That's why we are extremely pleased to have the opportunity to work closely with the SBA's Washington, DC Office of Technology to see if we can help change this."

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