April 15, 2014

Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity

Dr. Heather Wilson  
President  
South Dakota School of Mines and Technology  
501 East St. Joseph Street  
Rapid City, SD 57701

Dear Dr. Wilson:

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has completed its compliance review of the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology (SDSMT), a recipient of NASA financial assistance. This limited scope review, focused on the Department of Geology and Geological Engineering (GGE), was conducted pursuant to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) and NASA's Title IX implementing regulations at 14 C.F.R. Part 1253, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs receiving Federal financial assistance through NASA.

The review was conducted to determine whether SDSMT is in compliance with NASA's Title IX regulations; specifically, to ensure that the GGE Department provides equal educational opportunity regardless of gender. Please find enclosed a copy of NASA's report of the compliance review and the NASA Title IX regulations.

Based on an evaluation of the data provided by SDSMT and from on-site interviews and observations, NASA finds SDSMT to be in compliance with the Title IX procedural requirements regarding coordination, grievance procedures, and self-evaluation. However, the University must review and revamp its Title IX policy dissemination efforts, beginning with Web site information on Title IX related policies and procedures, which currently suffers from, among other things, de-emphasizing the role of the Title IX Coordinator in the initiation of complaints, in contradiction to the South Dakota Board of Regents grievance procedures and sexual harassment policy followed by SDSMT.

In regard to methods of program administration in the GGE program, NASA found that the program is in compliance with Title IX requirements in that we did not find methods that were having an adverse impact or otherwise limiting program participation based on gender. The recommendations in the report are designed to assist SDSMT and GGE in enhancing their efforts to ensure equal educational opportunity regardless of gender. We find that SDSMT is well on its way in this arena. NASA will check back with SDSMT to
find that SDSMT is well on its way in this arena. NASA will check back with SDSMT to learn more about the progress the University is making on our Title IX compliance recommendations and any additional Title IX information SDSMT wishes to provide three months from the date of this letter.

We have also included a summary literature review on gender equity and STEM programs as an appendix to our compliance report to further assist SDSMT in its ongoing equal opportunity efforts in this area. For additional civil rights technical assistance, you may also wish to visit our MissionSTEM website at http://missionstem.nasa.gov/. The MissionSTEM Web site is designed to assist NASA grant recipients in meeting their compliance obligations under NASA's equal opportunity laws and regulations. To this end, the site provides a host of information and resources on compliance requirements as well as promising practices of our grant recipients.

Finally, NASA observed a number of promising practices of both the University and the GGE program, particularly regarding discrimination and bias training for faculty and staff serving on search and screening committees or who have hiring authority, as well as targeted outreach efforts, such as the Go Women breakfast at each of SDSMT's Go to Mines recruitment events. We note also that SDSMT has been active in helping with the Women in Science conference, which encourages young girls to consider careers in science and engineering. This event is held on the SDSM&T campus. NASA has noted these in its report and plans to incorporate them into future MissionSTEM postings on promising practices for ensuring equal opportunities in STEM programs.

SDSMT was very helpful in facilitating NASA's review prior to, during, and after the on-site visit. NASA wishes to thank the Director, Office of Human Resources, Kelli Shuman, as well as the faculty, staff, and students of the GGE program for their participation in the review.

Under the Freedom of Information Act, it may be necessary to release the report and related records upon request. If NASA receives such a request, it will seek to protect, to the extent provided by law, personal information which, if released, could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy.

If you have any questions regarding this correspondence, please contact Mr. David Chambers, on 202-358-0953 or david.r.chambers@nasa.gov.

Sincerely,

Brenda R. Manuel
Associate Administrator for Diversity and Equal Opportunity

Enclosures
cc:
Dr. Laurie C. Anderson, Department Head and Professor of Geology
Dr. Edward Duke, Professor, Manager of Engineering Mining Experiment Station
Ms. Kelli Shuman, Director, Human Resources