Dr. David B. Williams  
President  
University of Alabama in Huntsville  
301 Sparkman Drive  
Huntsville, AL 35899

Dear Dr. Williams:

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has completed a compliance review of the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH), a recipient of NASA financial assistance. This limited scope review, focused on the Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering (MAE) graduate program, 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. A copy of the regulations is enclosed. The review was conducted to determine whether UAH was in compliance with NASA's Title IX regulations; specifically, to ensure that the MAE Department provides equal educational opportunity regardless of gender. Please also find enclosed a copy of NASA's report of the compliance review.

Based on an evaluation of data provided by UAH and on-site interviews and observations, we find the MAE Department to be in compliance with NASA's Title IX regulations. Overall, we find that the UAH MAE Department provides a welcoming and inclusive environment for its graduate students, supported by proactive steps on the part of MAE faculty and UAH administration. More specifically, we find that UAH is meeting EO requirements regarding its Title IX coordination, grievance procedures, policy dissemination.

However, while we find that the UAH and MAE Dept. are proactively working to maintain an inclusive and welcoming academic environment, we note that the MAE Dept. faces challenges, particularly with regard to the recruitment and retention of women in the graduate program. The numbers of women continue to drop at higher rates than those of men at the graduate level. NASA recommends that UAH and the MAE Dept. further their Title IX self-evaluation efforts to explore more fully the reasons why this is happening and possible action to address it, such as targeted recruitment efforts to expand the pipeline.
Regarding promising practices, we note that, both prior to and since NASA’s on-site Title IX review, UAH and the MAE Department have taken a variety of actions to advance gender equity and diversity in the program, particularly in faculty appointments. Regarding the report’s recommendations, NASA will contact UAH in one year to follow up on UAH’s progress in continuing to enhance its equal opportunity efforts relating to Title IX.

The report also identifies several promising practices at UAH designed to ensure equal educational opportunity regardless of gender. For example, the UAH Dean of Engineering, in his previous capacity as a professor in Industrial and Systems Engineering, and as Dean, works with faculty and students to engage STEM students in service-oriented work that appeals to a broadly diverse group of students, and continues to identify service-oriented projects as a critical component of the curriculum, providing students the opportunity to use their engineering skills and capabilities in the community. NASA plans to include promising practices developed by UAH in a forthcoming technical assistance document on promising practices.

UAH has been very helpful in facilitating the review prior to, during, and after the on-site visit. NASA wishes to thank Dr. Vistasp Karbhari, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs; Dr. Phillip Farrington, Dean, College of Engineering; Dr. Kadir Frendi, Chair, MAE Department; Mrs. Delois Smith, Vice President for Diversity and Title IX Coordinator; and Mrs. Claudia Ford, Executive Assistant to the Vice President for Diversity, as well as the faculty, staff and graduate students of the MAE Department, for their participation in the review.

Under the Freedom of Information Act, it may be necessary to release the report and related records on 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, Senior Civil Rights Analyst, Program Planning and Evaluation Division, Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity, on 202-358-2128 at david.r.chambers@nasa.gov.

Sincerely,

Brenda R. Manuel, Esq.
Assistant Administrator for Diversity and Equal Opportunity

Enclosures

c: Dr. Vistasp Karbhari, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs
   Dr. Phillip Farrington, Dean, College of Engineering
   Dr. Kadir Frendi, Chair, MAE Department
   Mrs. Delois Smith, Vice President for Diversity and Title IX Coordinator