May 31, 2012

Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity  

President Eli Capilouto  
Office of the President  
101 Main Building  
University of Kentucky  
Lexington, KY 40506-0032

Dear President Capilouto:

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has completed its compliance review of the University of Kentucky (UK), a recipient of NASA financial assistance. This limited scope review, focused on the Department of Mechanical Engineering (ME), 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 UK was in compliance with NASA's Title IX regulations; specifically, to ensure that the ME program 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 UK and from on-site interviews and observations, NASA finds UK to be in compliance with the Title IX procedural requirements regarding coordination, grievance procedures, policy dissemination, and self-evaluation efforts. NASA also finds that UK is in compliance with requirements to provide for methods of administration that do not differently impact or otherwise limit program participation of beneficiaries based on gender. The recommendations in our compliance report are therefore designed to assist UK and ME to enhance existing efforts to ensure equal opportunities regardless of gender. We have also included a summary literature review on gender equity and STEM programs as an appendix to our compliance report to further assist UK in its ongoing equal opportunity efforts in this area.

Finally, NASA observed a number of promising practices of both UK and the ME program. For example, ME has been able to make several “dual career” hires over the past several years thanks in large part to strong support from the Dean of College of Engineering (CoE). The trailing spouse issue is a difficult challenge for many of the schools reviewed by NASA and UK is to be applauded for its success in this regard. Also,
the UK Society of Women Engineers (SWE) Student Chapter is a leader on campus and organizes the main undergraduate career fair for CoE. UK SWE is active in outreach activities such as “Bring a Girl to Engineering Day” and visits local schools to promote engineering. UK SWE provides a support network for undergraduate females considering engineering as a major by sending a letter to incoming female freshman who are planning to attend the UK CoE in the fall.

UK was very helpful in facilitating NASA’s review prior to, during, and after the on-site visit. NASA wishes to thank UK’s Vice President and Assistant Vice President for Equal Opportunity, Mr. Terry Allen and Ms. Patty Bender, as well as the faculty, staff, and students of the ME 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 Ms. Sharon Wagner, on 202-358-0953 at swagner@nasa.gov.

Sincerely,

Brenda R. Manuel
Associate Administrator for
Diversity and Equal Opportunity

Enclosures

cc:
Terry Allen, Vice President for Equal Opportunity
Patty Bender, Assistant Vice President for Equal Opportunity
Dr. Tomas W. Lester, Dean, College of Engineering
Dr. L. Scott Stephens, Chair, Department of Mechanical Engineering
Dr. Suzanne Smith, Professor, Department of Mechanical Engineering