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March 4, 2009

RE: Call for industry engagement to accelerate Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) initiatives

Dear Industry Leader,

Innovation, invention and discovery are engines that drive U.S. competitiveness, quality of life and national security. These engines, in turn, are driven by the scientific and technological advances made possible by the nation's STEM workforce. According to recent surveys ninety-five percent of fortune 500 CEOs are concerned that the United States is in danger of losing its global leadership position in science and technology because of a shortage of STEM manpower. As leaders in technology companies in Hampton Roads, we need to collectively foster more STEM investment and initiatives in Hampton Roads, VA. This is our collective challenge and we need to lead the solution!

Today, the quantity and quality of that workforce, according to many indications, is at risk. Many policy experts and business leaders find this troubling, particularly now at a time when other countries are making significant investment increases in their own STEM infrastructures, including STEM education.

In response to growing unease about America's ability to compete Congress passed, and President Bush signed into law, the America COMPETES Act which is designed to deepen the future STEM occupational talent pool. In the Commonwealth, Secretary of Technology Aneesh Chopra recently created a Senior Advisor on STEM Initiatives, Jim Batterson, who will coordinate STEM activities across the Commonwealth. But, we as corporate leaders need to act and act swiftly; these trends demonstrate a real and urgent need to more successfully harness the talent of a diverse pool of next generation scientist, technologists, engineers, and mathematicians.

We see that while industry, government labs, and higher education have multiple forums for on-going exchange of strategic and current needs and ideas, there is very limited conversation between industry/government labs/research universities and K-12. This is our challenge as industry leaders - planning for the workforce of tomorrow.

This call for action is twofold:

- 1) Join our STEM committee which is forming under the charter to coordinate industry driven STEM initiatives and solidly link them to educational driven STEM initiatives. This committee will **support** Tech Nite STEM awards, promote existing STEM initiatives like Project Lead the Way, Future City, National Rocketry, Legos Leagues, First Robotics, Science Fair, and coordinate industry involvement in existing STEM programs through organizations like HRP, NDIA, HRTC, AFCEA, TASC and HR FIRST.

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- 2) Commit financial resources to support scholarships, initiatives, and ongoing programs at educational institutions in Hampton Roads. Specifically, we are looking for businesses to donate \$500 - \$5,000 annually to establish a Hampton Roads technology scholarship fund. This scholarship in conjunction with the existing STEM initiatives will stimulate additional interest and local pipelines of talent.

By coordinating activities and leveraging current STEM initiatives, the technology industry can create the robust local pipeline of STEM talent needed to compete in the future. Please identify your company's POC and email Jennifer Barker, HRTC Director of Operations, jbarker@hrtc.org 757-645-2447 to help us address this challenge.

Josh Jackson and Lang Nguyen
Hampton Roads Technology Council