NATIONAL AWARD FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Founding Executive Director's Statement

September 1, 2006

Dear Colleagues, Family, and Friends,

It is a great honor to have been named the recipient of the **2006 Emerald Honors National Award for Educational Leadership** *by Science Spectrum Magazine*. To join the elite group of past winners who have done everything from developing technologies for high-speed flight at NASA to producing an entirely new class cancer-fighting drugs is very special. This national award indicates to all of us at **Science and Engineering Alliance, Inc. (known as SEA)**, that our mission is an important one.

The President has stated on many occasions that *"the bedrock of America's competitiveness is a well-educated and skilled workforce, and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is helping to ensure that every student receives a high-quality education."* The President's American Competitiveness Initiative (ACI) and NCLB are both at the core of what SEA is all about. During our 16-year history, our efforts have centered on assisting a group of the nation's outstanding historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), with strong technical education programs, in support of their research and teaching goals to help ensure an adequate supply of globally competitive American scientists and engineers.

The legacy of our academic partners and all HBCUs, make it clear that under the strain of intense social and economic pressures, these institutions have emerged as *"National Landmarks."* Since their inception immediately following the emancipation of Negro slaves in 1865, they have had a remarkable impact on transforming many of the nation's citizenry into productive men and women who have become national and international leaders. The challenge in reaching their goals does not come from them serving the privileged, but is linked to a tradition of these institutions *"letting in"* and dealing effectively with the underprepared and underprivileged, who normally would be *"left out"* of the nation's educational system. The miraculous achievements by HBCUs are found in their ability to instill in many students from economically depressed backgrounds the boldness to compete in unchartered territory and the confidence and skills to succeed once they are there.

Our highest priority at SEA is to continue the long-standing tradition of working toward the common good of the nation and leaving no child behind by opening doors of opportunity and creating access for some of the nation's underrepresented talent, and our performance goals focus our attention on the achievement of this priority. We recognize, however, that to be a successful Alliance we must demonstrate value-added benefit of the technical marketing and community relations' management efforts put forth for the members. That's why our recent grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) calling for SEA to lead the strategic involvement of HBCUs and other minority serving institutions (MSIs) in the National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON) long-term project, is so vitally important to the continued success of SEA. This new initiative and another recent grant from the Doris Duke Foundation now adds to a long list of research projects initiated by SEA on behalf of its HBCU members and a broad range of other MSIs. These two initiatives link well with the recent grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation that calls for SEA to lead an effort to increase contracting capacity among HBCUs, other MSIs, and some of the nation's small majority institutions.

While our accomplishments have been noteworthy, building on our past performance will present some special challenges because we must chart our path to the future in a time of significant change. The challenges are found in

every sector of our society, resulting in the need to restructure and rethink how we do things. Therefore, as an organization, we must adapt as appropriate, to the fact that there are changing financial pressures resulting from natural disasters and cutbacks in Federal and private R&D funding. Moreover, some adjustments are required based on demographic shifts that have emerged in recent years. Globalization and technological innovations, like the emergence of new web-based collaboration and communication tools that are flattening and shrinking our world, have brought new operational strategies that continue to take on greater significance in all sectors of the marketplace. A focus on our mission and our performance goals serves as a guide through these turbulent times and provides the best roadmap for instructing us on how to merge some of the new innovations with some of the old strategies that seem to be timeless. We look forward to these new challenges with great anticipation and the new opportunities that will emerge from them for our faculty and students.

Thanks to all who have played and continue to play a role in our success. A special thanks to the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Economic Impact and Diversity, and one of its major national laboratories, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL), both of whom have supported the SEA program from its inception. Our gratitude is also expressed to the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), who officially joined SEA in 2002.

Therefore, on behalf of the SEA member institutions: Alabama A&M University, Jackson State University, Prairie View A&M University, Southern University and A&M College, and the entire HBCU academic community, and our many individual supporters, I invite you or a representative from your organization to join me at the award presentation ceremony that will be held September 16, 2006 at the Baltimore Convention Center from 7:00 PM to 10:00 PM.

We are excited about what lies ahead for SEA and the services it provides to the underserved academic community now and in the future. Immediately following the award ceremony, the recipients will have an opportunity to interact with their guest.

With warm regards,
Robert Louis Shepard (Bob)