January 24, 2011

Dear Participant:

We at the National Science Foundation welcome you to the 2011 Math and Science Partnership (MSP) Learning Network Conference. Our theme for this year is **MSP: From Partnerships of Innovation to Student Success.** This theme addresses a central expectation, evident since the founding of the program in 2002, that novel strategies within projects of the MSP portfolio will be linked to positive impacts for K-12 students. Along these lines, there are two different strands to organize the breakout sessions at this conference.

One strand focuses on the use of student data to inform and refine MSP work. Interestingly, the MSP program has never defined what student data projects should collect and utilize as their primary resource. While the past decade has driven our school partners to emphasize state assessments as important data, MSP projects also collect other information. For example, course-taking patterns can reveal much about student curricular choices and whether or not students are moving along pathways that will enable them to proceed into STEM careers. Also, quite a few MSP projects look for active student participation in practices – e.g., mathematical discourse, scientific inquiry or engineering design – within the STEM disciplines as sources of data. I urge you all to engage in dialogue on what you value most among the various measures of student success as we enter a new era of common core standards and assessments.

The second strand highlights developing strong research designs related to student success. This perspective is one that has evolved over the years of the MSP program and is one that we hope you extend as we look for empirical evidence for the outcomes of our work. Connecting the dots between partnership-developed interventions, influences on teachers who grow in their content and pedagogical knowledge in order to make positive changes in their classrooms, and improved students achievement is not an easy task. It is only through continual reflection on their research designs that MSP projects will provide evidence for why their work has succeeded and be able to most strongly share their work with the field of STEM education.

We thank the members of the 2011 Conference Planning Committee and the LNC Organizing Committee at the University of Nebraska who have assisted us in organizing and focusing this meeting. Our appreciation goes to the Conference speakers; MSP project team members who have graciously agreed to share their work at this meeting; and our colleagues at the U. S. Department of Education who, with their state MSP efforts, broaden our collective work. Most importantly, we thank you for your participation. Your expertise and investment of time, your leadership in your projects, and your willingness to share what you are learning continue to be critical to advancing our effort to improve STEM teaching and learning for the Nation’s students.

Have a great meeting!

James E. Hamos
MSP Team Leader
Math and Science Partnership