



Virginia small satellite initiative investment could return millions

Virginia could better position itself in the \$203 billion global satellite industry with a proposed initiative that may bring in up to \$16.2 million and potentially much greater returns to the state, a Virginia Tech study found. The Small Satellites (Small Sat) Virginia Initiative, proposed by the Virginia Space Grant Consortium, aims to push Virginia to the forefront of small satellite technology by investing \$4 million annually for three years into university student centered, small satellite research and development activities to support the statewide industry.

Virginia Tech's Office of Economic Development found that the investment could create 57 to 89 new high-paying aerospace jobs in the state over three years. The figures are conservative, considering they don't account for leveraged money or the anticipated impact of strengthening the small satellite industry. Based on numbers from past research and development investments in Virginia and other states, the estimated return on investment could total as high as an additional \$72 million or more.



The Virginia Space Grant Consortium established a Virginia Small Satellite Working Group in 2011 and is leading efforts to maximize Virginia engagement in small satellite initiatives. "When it comes to Small Sat interests and capabilities, Virginia has it all – launch capabilities, research and development, mission development and planning, satellite manufacturing, workforce development through our outstanding universities, and companies capitalizing on the global data and communications applications," said Mary Sandy, director of the Virginia Space Grant Consortium. "We want to coalesce all aspects of this sector to make Virginia the 'go-to' state for Small Sat activities."

The initiative has attracted 31 partners like NASA Langley, NASA Wallops, the Virginia Commercial Space Flight Authority, Virginia Tech's College of Engineering, 20 Virginia-based companies and more—all of whom signed letters of support for the initiative. "It is our position that driving small sat business will grow our business along with many other Virginia companies," said Phil Prosser, business development manager at Moog Inc. in Blacksburg. "It will help us understand market trends and position ourselves to capture business. It will allow networking opportunities to look at joint ventures and research activities with both businesses and universities."

As the Office of Economic Development continues working with the Virginia Space Grant Consortium on the initiative, the office is also taking a broader look at aerospace and aviation in Virginia. Since 2015, the office has been working closely with the Virginia Department of Aviation to map out a plan to strengthen the aerospace and aviation workforce in the Commonwealth. "Along with unmanned systems and other emerging technologies, small satellites are an important component of Virginia's growing future in aerospace," said Scott Tate, associate director of the Office of Economic Development.

The initiative was proposed to the Virginia Joint Commission on Technology and Science's Nanosatellites Technology Advisory Committee in 2015. The committee unanimously endorsed the proposal and Commonwealth seed funding is being requested. A kick-off meeting with all participants is planned for fall 2016.

For more information about the Virginia Space Grant Consortium and the initiative, please contact Mary Sandy at msandy@odu.edu or 757-766-5210. To learn more about the Office of Economic Development's study, please contact Scott Tate at atate1@vt.edu.