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The Medical Center of the Americas Foundation and the Center for Advancing Innovation Launch the SPACE RACE Challenge in Partnership with NASA

EL PASO, TEXAS December 17, 2015 – The Medical Center of the Americas (MCA) Foundation has partnered with the [Center for Advancing Innovation](#) (CAI) to launch the [SPACE RACE](#), a Paso del Norte (PDN) Innovation Challenge designed to spur regional economic growth by launching new startups to advance and commercialize NASA’s commercially viable inventions that are available for licensing. CAI, a nonprofit organization based out of Bethesda, MD focused on accelerating commercialization and creating new entrepreneurial platforms is leveraging the new [Startup NASA](#) initiative, which offers startups the opportunity to license patented NASA technologies with no upfront fees. Startup NASA helps address two of the biggest challenges faced by startup companies: raising capital and securing intellectual property rights. The SPACE RACE will also help the PDN region address its biggest challenges to growing the entrepreneurial ecosystem, lack of commercially-viable deal flow and limited trained high-tech entrepreneurs.

A prime example of a NASA invention is a voiceless communication device which is a wearable sensor that measures the movement of speech muscles, translating this measurement to sound. “This invention is only one of the thousands of breakthrough technologies NASA has developed that have significant commercial viability and are near to the goal line,” said Rosemarie Truman, Founder and CEO of CAI. “We are thrilled to have the opportunity to hyper-accelerate the commercialization of “gazelle-like” NASA inventions by pairing our challenge accelerator model with NASA’s new licensing arrangement,” said Rosemarie. “The SPACE RACE challenge will be different in that we are raising a substantial seed fund with the MCA and regional investors to give new startups enough escape velocity to get to Series A financing.”

The first stage of the initiative is a challenge-accelerator program where teams will compete to launch startups around MCA & CAI-identified NASA inventions that have near-term commercialization potential and are a good fit to the PDN region’s capabilities. MCA & CAI will crowdsource multi-disciplinary teams to create elevator speeches and write business plans exploring the market potential of the technologies and proposed path to commercialization. The CAI accelerator entrepreneurship training program will provide invaluable experiential learning to help startups have a high probability of successful outcomes. The teams will submit their business plans and perform a live pitch to a world-class panel of judges, such as Jim Cantrell, co-founder of SpaceX. Winners will be selected based on the quality of their elevator speech, business plan, financial model, live pitch and other deliverables, and they will be given a cash prize. Winning teams will be then encouraged to become startup founders and pursue licensing of the technologies from NASA.

Winners of the business plan phase will be eligible to enter the second stage of the competition where they will be eligible to receive angel and seed funding through the MCA Innovation Fund that will

provide an investment of up to \$1.2 million into a select number of startups that meet due diligence requirements.

The challenge will be repeated up to four times over four years, each year with a different technology focused on regional strengths and capabilities: the first year will include Advanced Manufacturing (medical device, optics and robotics); the second year will focus on Healthcare and Life Sciences; year three will centered on Clean Energy and Water Technologies; and the cornerstone of year four will be Border Trade and Cyber Security inventions.

“The MCA’s main goal is to create a platform in the region that will unlock our entrepreneurial potential and strengthen the regional economy,” said Emma Schwartz, president of the MCA Foundation. “As a region we are working to combat our falling rank as a city to become more globally competitive. I believe that we have the capability and potential, but we need a robust program like this SPACE RACE Challenge to galvanize the regional players together with the global entrepreneurial and venture ecosystem.” Over the four years of the Challenge, MCA and CAI hopes to launch up to 40 high-tech startups in the region, provide national and international exposure to the PDN region’s resources, bring serial entrepreneurs to the region and provide training to members of various organizations through the accelerator.

Interested parties should start forming their teams now and nominating inventions for the challenge; please go to this link to connect with others prospective team members or to vote for a technology: <http://www.space-race.org/interested/>. An overview of team requirements can be found [here](#). NASA inventions will be the topics of the challenge; teams may find the final NASA inventions selected for the challenge at <http://www.space-race.org>. Teams may enter their teams into the challenge starting January 19, 2015; challenge submissions will be accepted until March 27, 2016. A press conference will be held on January 25th, and the MCA and CAI will have a “RoadShow” from January 25th to 29th across several locations in the region to explain the SPACE RACE and recruit teams. To stay up to date on the detailed challenge launch, please sign up for updates [here](#) and follow Twitter @CAIStartups.

About the Medical Center of the Americas Foundation

The Medical Center of the Americas (MCA) Foundation, a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization, is focused on creating a world class medical center to foster and accelerate biomedical innovation, creating new employment opportunities while meeting healthcare needs of the Paso del Norte region (the larger cross-border region of El Paso County; Doña Ana County, New Mexico; and Juárez, Mexico). The MCA is spearheading this regional initiative with the development of the Cardwell Collaborative biomedical research and commercialization building, the SPACE RACE, PDN Challenge and many other programs. www.MCAmericas.org

About the Center for Advancing Innovation:

The Center for Advancing Innovation (CAI) is a global public-private partnership non-profit focused on creating a virtuous circle of innovation and driving growth breakthroughs through novel, creative paradigms and models. CAI's mission is to accelerate and increase the volume of research commercialization in support of high growth business in order to ignite entrepreneurship, bolster the global economy and maximize the commercial and knowledge-based potential of promising inventions. CAI’s award-winning challenge-based accelerator, rigorous fact-based due diligence and capital efficient lean management models serve to hyper-accelerate “gazelle” high-performing startups for outsized investor returns. For more information about CAI, please visit <http://www.thecenterforadvancinginnovation.org>