



## **Iridium NEXT Mission Team Launches One of the Largest Aerospace Scholarship Programs in the Industry**

**\$250,000 Endowment to Support Aerospace Education Iridium, Thales Alenia Space, SpaceX, Orbital, Lockheed Martin, Boeing and SEAKR Anchor Initiative to Inspire and Support Next Generation of Innovators**

MCLEAN, Va., March 15, 2012 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Iridium Communications Inc. (Nasdaq:IRDM) announces the launch of the Iridium NEXT Mission Team Scholarship program. The endowment is a multi-year commitment by Iridium NEXT partner companies to support the development of innovative young aerospace engineers. The company unveiled the program at an Iridium NEXT Mission Team partner event on March 14 in conjunction with SATELLITE 2012 in Washington, D.C. Thales Alenia Space, SpaceX, Orbital Sciences Corp., Lockheed Martin, Boeing and SEAKR, along with Iridium, have already committed almost half of the anticipated \$250,000 endowment, and corporate participation is expected amongst the 30 Iridium NEXT Mission Team members. The scholarship program will be administered by the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) Foundation, and will begin distributing awards to undergraduate students for the 2012-13 academic year.

The Iridium NEXT Mission Team Program will award scholarships annually to the best and brightest aerospace engineering students in the world, including those already engaged in the development of Iridium NEXT through Iridium or partner internships. Each year, scholarship recipients will form the Iridium NEXT Class of Scholars.

Iridium NEXT, the company's next generation satellite constellation and the world's most significant commercial space program, is in development and scheduled to begin launching in 2015.

"As a leader in developing innovative solutions and encouraging an open and collaborative platform for product development, Iridium is proud to begin a *new* legacy of innovation by finding and rewarding the world's most promising aerospace engineers," said Scott Smith, executive vice president, Iridium NEXT. "The Iridium NEXT Mission Team is an unmatched group of aerospace leaders from around the world whose commitment to creating and launching the most cutting edge satellite constellation will not only improve the Iridium network, it will have a lasting impact on the global communications infrastructure as a whole. There is no better way to revolutionize the future of the aerospace industry than by encouraging and enabling the academic pursuit of the world's budding engineers."

The first Iridium NEXT Class of Scholars, as with the years ahead, will be selected by a designated committee of AIAA Foundation education committee members based on a set of academic and objective criteria. The AIAA Foundation fosters growth and ignites interest in science and technology through STEM K-12 education programs, prepares students for the workforce with scholarships, and hosts student conferences, among other initiatives.

"The Iridium NEXT Mission Team Scholarship program will be one of the most significant educational opportunities anywhere in the aerospace industry," said AIAA Foundation president Bob Dickman. "Not only will the contributions of these leading innovators help to support students everywhere, the program is a great complement to the AIAA Foundation's ongoing commitment to investing in the future of the aerospace profession. Together we will make a lasting and positive impact on the future of our industry and beyond."

**About Iridium Communications Inc.**

Iridium is the only mobile voice and data satellite communications network that spans the entire globe. Iridium enables connections between people, organizations and assets to and from anywhere, in real time. Together with its ever-expanding ecosystem of partner companies, Iridium delivers an innovative and rich portfolio of reliable solutions for markets that require truly global communications. The company has a major development program underway for its next-generation network — Iridium NEXT. Iridium Communications Inc. is headquartered in McLean, Va., U.S.A., and its common stock trades on the NASDAQ Global Select Market under the ticker symbol IRDM. For more information about Iridium products, services and partner solutions, visit [www.iridium.com](http://www.iridium.com).

The Iridium Communications Inc. logo is available at <http://www.globenewswire.com/newsroom/prs/?pkgid=10426>

### **About Thales Alenia Space**

The European leader in satellite systems and a major player in orbital infrastructures, Thales Alenia Space is a joint venture between Thales (67%) and Finmeccanica (33%). Thales Alenia Space and Telespazio embody the two groups' "Space Alliance." Thales Alenia Space sets the global standard in solutions for space telecommunications, radar and optical Earth observation, defense and security, navigation and science. With consolidated revenues of 2,1 billion euros in 2011, Thales Alenia Space has 7,200 employees at 10 industrial sites in France, Italy, Spain, Germany and Belgium. For more information, go to [www.thalesaleniaspace.com](http://www.thalesaleniaspace.com).

### **About SpaceX**

SpaceX designs, manufactures and launches the world's most advanced rockets and spacecraft. With a diverse manifest of launches to deliver commercial and government satellites to orbit, SpaceX is the world's fastest growing space launch company. In 2010, SpaceX became the first commercial company in history to put a spacecraft into orbit and return it safely to Earth. With the retirement of the space shuttle, the SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket and Dragon spacecraft will soon carry cargo, and one day astronauts, to and from the Space Station for NASA. Founded in 2002 by Elon Musk, SpaceX is a private company owned by management and employees, with minority investments from Founders Fund, Draper Fisher Jurvetson, and Valor Equity Partners. The company has over 1,600 employees in California, Texas, Washington, D.C., and Florida. For more information, visit [www.SpaceX.com](http://www.SpaceX.com).

### **About Orbital Sciences Corp.**

Orbital develops and manufactures small- and medium-class rockets and space systems for commercial, military and civil government customers. The company's primary products are satellites and launch vehicles, including low-Earth orbit, geosynchronous-Earth orbit and planetary exploration spacecraft for communications, remote sensing, scientific and defense missions; human-rated space systems for Earth-orbit, lunar and other missions; ground- and air-launched rockets that deliver satellites into orbit; and missile defense systems that are used as interceptor and target vehicles. Orbital also provides satellite subsystems and space-related technical services to U.S. Government agencies and laboratories. More information about Orbital can be found at <http://www.orbital.com>.

### **About Lockheed Martin**

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin is a global security and aerospace company that employs

about 123,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture, integration and sustainment of advanced technology systems, products and services. The Corporation's net sales for 2011 were \$46.5 billion.

### **About Boeing**

A unit of The Boeing Company, [Boeing Defense, Space & Security](#) is one of the world's largest defense, space and security businesses specializing in innovative and capabilities-driven customer solutions, and the world's largest and most versatile manufacturer of military aircraft. Headquartered in St. Louis, Boeing Defense, Space & Security is a \$32 billion business with 62,000 employees worldwide. Follow us on Twitter: [@BoeingDefense](#).

### **About SEAKR**

SEAKR Engineering ([www.SEAKR.com](http://www.SEAKR.com)) is a world-leading provider of advanced state-of-the-art electronic avionics for space applications. Since its inception in 1982, SEAKR has delivered some of the most sophisticated solutions in the industry on-time and on-budget. More than ninety of these units have launched with all having met or exceeded mission objectives. SEAKR's leading edge space avionics include IP routers as well as software-defined radios, high-performance payload processors, modular spacecraft avionics, and solid state recorders.

### **The AIAA Foundation**

The AIAA Foundation, the education division of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) ignites interest in science and technology through STEM K-12 education programs, prepares students for the workforce with scholarships and student conferences, promotes professional achievement via our Honors and Awards Programs for industry professionals and educators, and fosters innovation through competitions that push the envelope of current technologies.

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