

# NewsRelease



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## **Director of NASA's Mars Exploration Program goes "LIVE" with college students in Puerto Rico via videoconference**

Orlando Figueroa, the Director of NASA's Mars Exploration Program Office, will pay a "visit" to his alma mater in Puerto Rico and give a talk there -- and at two other universities at the same time -- to discuss the goals and objectives of the ambitious multi-year program of exploration.

Nearly 200 Hispanic students and faculty from Hispanic Educational Telecommunications Systems (HETS) member institutions, including the University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez; the University of Puerto Rico, Bayamon; and the San German campus of the Inter American University of Puerto Rico, will participate in Figueroa's videoconference presentation entitled "Mars: Robotic Exploration in the Coming Decades." The program is scheduled for Thursday, Oct. 31, 2002, at 1 p.m. EST.

"I am delighted to have the opportunity to interact with space and Mars enthusiasts from Puerto Rico in this way," said Figueroa. "I hope we can really take advantage of this technology to continue to educate and motivate the next generation of explorers," he said.

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Figuroa will discuss the goals and objectives of the Mars Exploration Program, provide a historical perspective leading to the present state of knowledge about the Red Planet, describe the program's architecture in this decade, and outline NASA's plans for the next decade of Mars Exploration. Following the simultaneous videoconference among the three campuses, students and faculty from each university can participate in a question-and-answer session with Figuroa.

The virtual-learning videoconference is part of an alliance between the Center for Distance Learning at NASA's Langley Research Center, Hampton, Va., and the HETS. Called NASA LIVE: Learning through Interactive Videoconferencing Experiences, the series of free videoconferencing programs is available from Langley's Center for Distance Learning.

HETS is a distance-learning consortium of 16 colleges and universities in the United States and Puerto Rico. This NASA/HETS initiative uses videoconferencing to communicate mathematics, scientific and engineering knowledge among Hispanic students attending colleges and universities affiliated with HETS. The program also encourages collaboration between NASA researchers and Hispanic college and university students.

Linking students and faculty to NASA in an interactive, virtual setting, NASA LIVE fosters interaction between universities and NASA experts by facilitating the exchange of ideas, information and knowledge, as well as raising awareness of and interest in NASA student and faculty support programs.

"Students and faculty attending this videoconference can learn more about the Mars Exploration Program directly from those experts at NASA who are leading this significant research project," said Nitza Hernandez, HETS Director. "The fact that Mr. Figuroa graduated from the Mayaguez campus of the University of Puerto Rico is a challenge and inspiration to Hispanic students in engineering and the sciences. He is a great role model for our students," she added.

For more information about NASA LIVE, visit:<http://live.larc.nasa.gov> or contact Katrina L. Townes, NASA LIVE Program Manager, at 757/864-3868 or [k.l.townes@larc.nasa.gov](mailto:k.l.townes@larc.nasa.gov). For more information about the HETS online mentoring program, visit: <http://www.virtualplaza.org> and <http://www.hets.org> or contact Dr. Nitza Hernandez at 787/766-1912, ext. 2222, or [nhernandez@virtualplaza.org](mailto:nhernandez@virtualplaza.org)