

A Letter From Keith J. Masback, President, United States Geospatial Intelligence Foundation



The United States Geospatial Intelligence Foundation (USGIF) represents nearly 200 government, industry, and academic organizations sharing interest in national security. We wholeheartedly endorse DoD STARBASE efforts to foster exploration of and participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) careers among the many young minds who experience this valuable enrichment program.

Geospatial Intelligence (GEOINT) is happening all around us. With the near-ubiquity of precision location data, facilitated primarily by smart phones and other devices with Global Positioning System (GPS) capabilities embedded, and the growing dependence on location-based services, ‘where’ has never been more meaningful or available in history. It’s not just using geospatial technologies, data, and tradecraft to understand our world. It’s no longer about finding one’s place on a map, but rather using the existing and emerging tools to understand where things are in relation to us. The ‘where’ of anything, as it relates to us – on the move – is now available in our hands. The potential of these technologies and their application is only limited by the imagination and education of our next generation of professionals.

The [Geospatial Intelligence Community] is experiencing growing demand for professionals with skills in STEM disciplines, and an insufficient supply of well-educated STEM professionals threatens our nation's ability to maintain the competitive edge required to address the increasing complexity of our national security challenges. Thankfully, the DoD STARBASE program is providing meaningful leadership towards mitigating that trend.

USGIF is excited about our growing relationship with DoD STARBASE. Recently, USGIF's Young Professionals Group connected with two STARBASE-affiliated schools in San Antonio, TX as part of our GEOINT 2011 Symposium. These young professionals introduced about 50 fifth and sixth grade students to the power of remote sensing and geospatial information during an innovative, educational GPS-based scavenger-hunt event. The excitement and curiosity the children displayed was refreshing and encouraging. Their innate ability to adapt the technology to the mission at hand was awe-inspiring.

For the past century, U.S. colleges and universities have led the world in STEM research and education. Statistical comparisons among industrialized nations clearly reveal evidence of declining emphasis on STEM education in the United States. The trend of declining enrollments among American citizens in collegiate STEM programs can be traced to declining interest among students in elementary and secondary education. Without ongoing investment in STEM education, our international prominence will surely fade making us a less innovative, competitive, and secure nation. USGIF fully supports the efforts of DoD STARBASE to prepare the next generation for STEM careers in the greater interests of our national security.

Keith J. Masback
President

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