

AGENDA ITEM 4.C.

RE: Recognition of Laredo College Students and Staff for Participation in the 2026 NASA Lunabotics Challenge

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: That the Laredo College Board of Trustees recognize the students and staff who participated in the **2026 NASA Lunabotics Challenge** in Orlando, Florida, for their outstanding representation of Laredo College in a national STEM competition.

No formal action is required. This item is presented for recognition purposes only.

BACKGROUND: Laredo College students, supported through the **Title III LEAPS POWER Grant**, participated in the **2026 NASA Lunabotics Challenge**, a national competition that challenges student teams to design, build, test, and operate a robotic system for lunar excavation and related space exploration activities.

Laredo College was one of only **50 teams selected nationwide** to participate in the competition. The students successfully built their robot from the ground up, applying skills in design, fabrication, programming, electronics, teamwork, project management, and problem-solving.

Laredo College's participation is especially noteworthy because the College was **one of only three community colleges represented among the teams selected nationwide** for the 2026 NASA Lunabotics Challenge. While many competing teams came from universities with established engineering, robotics, and aerospace programs, LC students accepted this challenge without the benefit of a traditional engineering program and demonstrated remarkable resilience, adaptability, and technical growth throughout the competition process.

The student journey included several phases:

Phase I: Registration, Design, and Proposal

Students submitted a comprehensive project management plan and a detailed 3D CAD design proposal for NASA review.

Phase II: NASA Review, Manufacturing, and Testing

After advancing through the review process, students spent several months machining custom hardware, wiring electronics, programming navigation routines, troubleshooting design challenges, and testing the robot.

Phase III: Proof of Life and Competition Clearance

The team submitted a required "Proof of Life" video demonstrating that the robot was complete and functioning before receiving clearance to travel and compete.

On-Site Competition

The team traveled to Florida for the competition, including qualifying runs at the Florida Space Institute's Exolith® Lab and final competition activities at the Kennedy Space Center.

In the competition results, Laredo College placed **20th in Autonomy** and **40th in Berm Construction**, demonstrating meaningful technical progress and strong potential for future competition years.

This accomplishment is significant not only because of the national competition, but because these students were not enrolled in a traditional engineering program. They accepted an engineering-level NASA challenge, learned through the process, built a functioning robot, and competed against institutions with established engineering, robotics, and aerospace programs. Their participation reflects courage, adaptability, innovation, and the transformational impact of high-impact STEM learning at Laredo College.

The following students are recommended for recognition:

Karla Salas
Adela Mendez-Martinez
Brianna Guajardo
Genesis Diaz
Magali De La Cruz Coronado
Alejandro Barrios
Emilio Estrada
Sebastian Treviño

The following staff members are recommended for recognition for their leadership, mentorship, travel coordination, and project support:

Rosemary Aguero-Riojas, Title III LEAPS POWER Project Director
Gabriela Solis-Cavazos
Dr. Selinda Martinez
Rogelio Sandoval

This recognition highlights Laredo College's commitment to student success, STEM engagement, workforce readiness, innovation, and high-impact learning experiences. Participation in the NASA Lunabotics Challenge enhanced the College's visibility, supported recruitment and retention, strengthened workforce readiness, and promoted innovation across STEM programs.

BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS: There is no additional budgetary impact associated with this recognition item.

Travel and related expenses for participation in the 2026 NASA Lunabotics Challenge were supported through the **Title III LEAPS POWER Grant**. Travel documentation identifies the purpose of the trip as attendance at the 2026 NASA Lunabotics Challenge under **Component 1, Objective 3** of the grant.

CONTACT PERSONS:

Dr. Minita Ramirez, President
Dr. David V. Arreazola, Vice President of Student Success and Compliance
Rosemary Aguero-Riojas, Title III LEAPS POWER Project Director