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May 04, 2011

**To:** The Stanford Community

**From:** Donald Kennedy, President Emeritus, Stanford University

**Re: NASA Science Update Public Announcement**

Stanford University is proud to be a participant in NASA's celebration of the successful end of Gravity Probe B – the technological and scientific marvel that has examined one of history's oldest and most meaningful ideas about the universe. It was an experiment motivated in the first instance by theoretical physics, yet able to utilize the new technologies of measurement in space. As a member of the Stanford faculty in the 1960's I knew about the project and sensed how valuable it could be – and how it had evolved from ideas with their roots in our Department of Physics. Even though at the time I did not understand the protocol, it plainly involved a collaboration that looked like a cross between an academic experiment and a Silicon Valley start-up. Later on, while I was President of Stanford between 1980 and 1992, Francis Everitt and I conferred occasionally about funding and logistic problems. As we worked together my respect for him and for his collaborators grew steadily. Among the team, Bill Fairbank and Brad Parkinson combined sets of different skills to provide an essentially interdisciplinary project what it needed. In a number of respects, Gravity Probe B represented not only an especially effective partnership between a public agency and a private academic institution; it also marked an advancing wave of interdisciplinary studies at Stanford that is attacking important problems by combining traditional academic units.

The successful completion of this extraordinary project is a tribute to NASA's steadfast commitment to significant progress in the fundamental sciences. Understanding the basic mechanics of the Universe is among the greatest challenges ever to have tempted the human imagination. This university is proud to have played a part in this experiment, and is privileged to have a role in saluting Professor Francis Everitt and his Stanford colleagues for their critical role in a remarkable partnership.

Donald Kennedy  
President emeritus  
Stanford University