

Dr. Wernher von Braun
Director
George C. Marshall Space Flight Center
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Huntsville, Alabama
Groundbreaking Ceremony
Research Institute
December 20, 1962

I am delighted to be present at this historic groundbreaking ceremony. By this act, Alabama is swinging wide open its doors to Space Age opportunity.

The establishment of this research institute is a dream come true for many people who shared a vision of Alabama's future. Educators, our U.S. Congressmen, state officials and legislators, Huntsville and Madison County residents, Army and NASA people both here and in Washington, and far-sighted all over the state have joined their efforts in transforming this dream into reality.

We, at the Marshall Center, have manifest reasons for our keen interest in this institute. The exploration of space is basically a research and development operation. We are doing something that has never been done before, and we are still learning how to do it.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration sponsors a broad program of basic and applied research involving practically all disciplines of the physical sciences. We search continuously for new knowledge that will advance the general technology of our times, and enable us to attain the goals in space established by the president.

The Marshall Center is responsible for basic and supporting scientific research in all fields related to its assigned missions. We rely heavily on the studies performed by institutes, universities, industry and other government agencies.

We are obviously elated that this research institute is being developed right on our front doorstep for we expect it to be of great value, not only to provide research but, more importantly, to provide rapid expansion of the university's graduate program by providing human and laboratory resources from the university's teaching center. Much of the research performed here may be applicable to thesis for advanced degrees. A strengthened academic program here will definitely assist to attract and retain the very best and most promising young scientific students as employees to help carry out our responsibilities in the nation's space program. The climate for intellectual growth also permits the economy and culture to flourish. Alabama, the entire South and the nation will benefit.

Huntsville and Alabama have the opportunity to set the pace for space science education in the South, perhaps even the nation. I'm proud of my state to promote the advancement of science and higher education.

If our state can produce the No. 1 football team in the nation, and the No. 1 rocket and missile center, we can surely establish the No. 1 educational center for rocket and space technology – if we put our minds to it.