2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

North Star Statement: The Astronaut Scholar award is a life-changing experience that launches the top undergraduate STEM students in the United States to positively change and influence society through innovation. It is one of the most pivotal endeavors to support.

Statement about COVID-19 Pandemic and Impact on Strategic Planning (April 21, 2020)
Immediately following the development of this 3-year strategic plan, the global COVID-19 pandemic arose. The mission of the Astronaut Scholarship Foundation is focused on the future and making the United States and the world better and stronger through innovation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. That remains our desire and intention in everything that we do.

Due to the pandemic, our current organizational focus is on dealing with short term issues to ensure the health of the organization, our staff, scholars, and supporters while still maintaining our long-term goals. Many of these activities are different from what we would be doing under normal circumstances. We will initiate implementation of the strategic plan at a future date when it is determined to be appropriate (anticipated to be between 9 and 18 months from the approval date of this document). At that time, ASF will revisit the goals and strategies herein to ensure that they remain relevant and challenging yet achievable and that they set a high standard to which ASF will aspire.

ASF is a beacon of hope, and we are committed to do everything we possibly can during this time to fulfill and advance our mission given all resources available to us. We are not only preparing and planning for the future; we are leaders of innovation.

PROGRAMS

Goal 1
Increase total scholarship funds granted annually while maintaining the quality and effectiveness of ASF programs.

Purpose: Provide significant financial support to the best and brightest STEM scholars while maintaining status and prestige as the largest privately funded, merit-based STEM scholarship in the United States.

Strategies:
1. Increase the maximum amount per scholarship award by up to 50% (i.e.: from the current maximum award amount of $10,000 to $15,000) starting with the 2021-22 academic year.
2. Develop an internal written policy for increasing the quantity of annual scholarship awards, while maintaining the prestige of the award as well as the quality and effectiveness of ASF programs, such as mentoring, professional development, and other follow-on programs.
3. Regularly communicate program resource needs to existing supporter base and encourage both new and existing donors to identify volunteer mentors, scholarship selection committee members, Innovation Corps members, corporate employment opportunities, and other resources.
4. Research the policies of each university partner to determine allowable uses of ASF scholarship funds (e.g.: tuition, books, room and board, laboratory fees, and other expenses). Investigate the possibility of enforcing uniformity. Investigate other methods for distributing ASF funds, when necessary, to ensure maximum benefit to the scholar. Determine cost and manpower of implementing any new procedures or policies and present to the Board of Directors for consideration.
Goal 2
Diversify demographics of scholarship recipients while maintaining ASF’s historically successful track record of being a solely merit-based award.

Purpose: Ensure that ASF maintains the highest possible quality of scholarship recipients by selecting from a broad pool of candidates. Ensure that ASF reflects the diversity and inclusion goals and desires of corporate, individual supporters, and the general public while encouraging inclusiveness of diverse thought in the culture of our scholars, which has proven crucial to technical problem solving.

Strategies:
1. Increase outreach to a variety of STEM affinity groups, including student, parent, community, and professional groups, to raise awareness of the Astronaut Scholarship.
2. Benchmark the diversity outreach and inclusiveness practices at other corporations and foundations and implement best practices.
3. Establish and track ASF scholarship program metrics related to demographic groups that are underrepresented in STEM fields.

Goal 3
Improve effectiveness and efficiency of program delivery to Astronaut Scholars.

Purpose: Strengthen the ties between ASF and its beneficiaries by offering and continually improving programs that enhance their careers and improve their communication, leadership abilities, and interpersonal relationship skills, leading to greater impact on America’s leadership in technology and innovation. The broad range of programs offered by ASF distinguishes our scholarship from all others, builds prestige, and is often cited by our scholars as being the most important aspect of the award.

Strategies:
1. Strengthen relationships with ASF university partners by formalizing the process of bringing new university partners on board and enhancing regular communications related to ASF scholarship program policies, procedures, criteria, and objectives. Communicate best practices for student awareness of the scholarship opportunity, nomination and selection process, and execution of award ceremonies.
2. Assess current offerings and develop additional content for the Michael Collins Family Professional Development program. Annually increase the number of Astronaut Scholars who participate. Track and report number of experiences offered annually and scholar participation.
3. Annually pair each new Astronaut Scholar with a matched mentor and evaluate program engagement of both the mentors and mentees at regular intervals. Continue to recruit mentors from all STEM fields to ensure sufficient availability.
4. Increase participation by Astronaut Scholars in the ASF Scholar Portal by facilitating internship and permanent job opportunities and enabling scholars to maintain their personal profiles and introduce employers to ASF.
5. Expand the American Dream Makers program by adding qualified people to the Innovation Corps and publicizing the opportunity for scholars to apply for assistance with their entrepreneurial endeavors. Target participation of 2 new scholars per year and 5 additional Innovation Corps members per year.
6. Assess the nomination and selection process for the Neil Armstrong Award of Excellence. Update the policy and procedures to improve efficiency and maintain the highest possible quality of nominees and recipients.
7. Strengthen ties with Astronaut Scholar alumni by enhancing communications to ensure their understanding of ASF activities, program offerings, and opportunities for engagement. Organize at least three regional Astronaut Scholar meetups per year to increase engagement and support of ASF. For selected events, include other interested parties (e.g.: existing and potential corporate and individual supporters) and provide opportunities for scholars to develop their leadership, public speaking, networking, and other soft skills.
8. Expand scholar recognition through ASF publicity, external media outlets, the annual Neil Armstrong Award of Excellence platform, and creation of opportunities for scholars to present their work and achievements in digital formats and in-person presentations.

9. Communicate ASF program offerings more broadly and increase interaction between scholars and supporters, thereby leading to increased involvement of supporters in the programs such as mentoring, professional development, and networking.

**FUND-RAISING**

**Goal 1**
Increase total individual, corporate, and foundation contributions by 3-5% annually.

**Purpose:** Raise the funds necessary to support our programs and achieve the ASF Mission. Build on areas where we have enjoyed past fundraising success while establishing new sources of funding.

**Strategies:**
1. Increase the number of corporate and foundation financial supporters by a net of at least 5-15 per year.
2. Develop and publicize opportunities for corporate and individual donors to fund existing scholarships and programs. Communicate the impact achieved using personalized, donor-specific summary reports.
3. Develop and implement a digital fundraising plan. Gather intelligence and analyze where future donations are likely to originate. Explore new communication channels and giving tools.
4. Engage more Astronauts. Create an education campaign for the astronaut community to communicate that ASF is their legacy, clearly explain ASF program offerings, and encourage astronauts to utilize ASF as their preferred choice when interested in funding scholarships.
5. Engage more Astronaut Scholars through enhanced communication and opportunities for meaningful volunteering. Annually increase total contributions to the Scholars Give Back campaign.
6. Increase awareness of ASF by targeting appearance in at least one major publication and/or an appearance or mention on a major news network.
7. Map the journey of various constituent groups in their relationship with ASF (e.g.: Astronauts, Astronaut Scholars, Mentors, Donors, Space Enthusiasts). Use this information to improve communications and create new opportunities for engagement.
8. Develop the recurring gift program, and annually increase total recurring contributions received.
9. Join workplace giving programs, such as America’s Charities and the Combined Federal Campaign
10. Develop at least one new relationship between ASF and a company to provide a potential revenue source, brand awareness, and engagement of corporate executives in ASF programs, such as mentoring, professional development, networking, and American Dream Makers.

**Goal 2**
Broaden corporate engagement to include companies working in STEM fields other than aerospace.

**Purpose:** Provide ASF with additional opportunities for networking among corporations and Astronaut Scholars. Partnerships with companies that work in all STEM fields will better reflect the diverse range of majors among Astronaut Scholars, while benefiting the companies, scholars, and ASF.

**Strategies:**
1. Develop and communicate an information package describing engagement opportunities and benefits available to corporate sponsors.
2. Raise awareness of ASF by arranging for staff, scholars, astronauts, and/or other constituents to attend or organize technical conferences in a variety of STEM fields, as ambassadors of ASF.
3. Work with local media and university public relations to increase awareness of university award ceremonies among local STEM companies. Offer opportunities for Astronaut and/or Astronaut Scholar interviews.
Goal 3
Diversify donor base to include younger age groups.

Purpose: Provide ASF with additional funding sources while engaging younger people to become involved in supporting ASF at an early stage, thereby leading to greater engagement and commitment throughout their lives.

Strategies:
1. Organize or partner with organizers of events that appeal to younger people. Include community engagement events, such as golf tournaments and pub crawls, in the schedules of established events, such as Space Rendezvous and the Astronaut Hall of Fame Induction, to engage a broader audience.
2. Create a blog and/or video series in which Astronaut Scholars provide content to inspire younger people to engage with ASF and pursue STEM education and careers.
3. Improve communications to Astronaut Scholars to encourage the transition from scholar to donor.

Goal 4
Establish a Legacy and Planned Giving program.

Purpose: Build relationships and obtain commitments to support the long-term success and financial health of ASF.

Strategies:
1. Establish a formal legacy giving program complete with a name, messaging, collateral, web presence, and appropriate recognition for donors.
2. Execute one-on-one meetings and relationship building with identified individuals who have a strong affinity for ASF. Encourage astronauts and supporters to name ASF in their will or estate plans.
3. Establish metrics to define both short-term and long-term success.
4. Develop and execute an outreach plan targeting wealthy individuals who have interests and goals that align with the ASF Mission.

Goal 5
Successfully plan and execute special events that honor the legacy of America’s astronauts while raising funds for ASF.

Purpose: Achieve the ASF mission while providing opportunities for inspiring current and future innovators to advance the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, providing the public with important space and STEM education, and commemorating the legacy of America’s pioneering astronauts.

Strategies:
1. Plan and execute U.S. Astronaut Hall of Fame Induction Gala annually. Lead the selection of inductees. Provide support to Delaware North for induction ceremony.
2. Plan and execute Innovators Weekend and Gala annually and determine methods for increasing overall revenue.
3. Plan and execute Space Rendezvous in November 2020 and continue in future years if determined to be viable. Assess the fundraising success and popularity of the event to determine potential enhancements and future viability.
4. Determine strategy for future anniversary and commemorative events and/or activities. Develop a list of upcoming occasions, determine appropriate level of commemoration (i.e.: special event, virtual commemoration, etc.), and execute selected activities.
5. Improve cost effectiveness of special events and assure that they are aligned with the Mission.
Goal 6
Annually increase total unrestricted revenue.

Purpose: Maintain existing financial support levels from ongoing activities that provide a base revenue stream and establish new sources of unrestricted funds.

Strategies:
2. Diversify the customer base of the ASF on-line store beyond memorabilia buyers. Maintain relevant and on-trend inventory.
3. Obtain unrestricted revenue from at least one additional source annually.

OPERATIONS AND GOVERNANCE

Goal 1
Ensure that ASF operations effectively support the Mission and Strategic Plan.

Purpose: Properly align the staffing levels, organizational structure, priorities, budget, and human resources functions to accomplish the Mission and strategic plan goals.

Strategies:
1. Maintain an organizational structure designed to execute the strategic plan and mission of the organization. Recruit and retain high quality talent.
2. Develop and support the annual budget to accomplish the strategic plan.
3. Assess ASF’s currently available technology and tools for operations to determine if training, software upgrades, additional tools, or other resources are needed.
4. Develop and implement a comprehensive risk management plan.
5. Benchmark other non-profit organizations and stay current on non-profit management trends. Implement best practices within the ASF organization, technology, and procedures.
6. Evaluate and explore potential partnerships with external organizations to supplement ASF resources and capabilities.

Goal 2
Establish a long-term organizational vision and align financial strategies to achieve the strategic plan and long-term vision.

Purpose: Maximize the Mission impact while assuring long-term sustainability.

Strategies:
1. Establish a long-term organizational vision with a minimum 10-year horizon to guide future strategic planning.
2. Complete financial analysis to determine the impact of increased scholarship spending on the annual budget, investment account balance, fundraising, staff, and volunteer support requirements.
3. Quantify the total cost of resources needed to support each Astronaut Scholar Award.
4. Develop a strategy for capital preservation versus utilization of available investment account funds. Review the benefits and limitations of establishing a Board-designated endowment versus reserve funds, with the goal of improving operational flexibility and donor perceptions.
Goal 3
Diversify Board of Directors and Board of Trustees composition.

Purpose: Ensure the ASF leadership group possesses the essential skills to fulfill the mission of ASF, drive financial results, and maintain levels of accountability organization-wide, while reflecting the composition of Astronaut Scholar major fields of study and demographics and being more inclusive of non-Hall of Fame astronauts, Astronaut Scholars, and corporate supporters in STEM fields other than aerospace.

Strategies:
1. Establish and implement a process for annually identifying potential members, with an awareness of filling any skills gaps for the Board of Directors and Board of Trustees and identifying current members who intend to end their term.
2. Finalize the Charter and objectives for the Board of Trustees to provide clear direction about their role in achieving the ASF Mission.

Goal 4
Enhance the image, prestige, credibility, and reputation of ASF.

Purpose: Broaden recognition of ASF’s Mission and impact through effective and efficient communication channels that clearly identify our success stories and provide data to drive operational improvement.

Strategies:
1. Update and enhance ASF website to align with the strategic plan goals. Verify that university partner web sites contain accurate and up-to-date information about the Astronaut Scholarship Award.
2. Develop and utilize metrics that provide measurable outcomes to improve operations. Utilize website and social media analytics to increase traffic by driving content to targeted groups.
3. Improve ranking on Guidestar to achieve Platinum status, Charity Navigator to achieve Four Star status, and seek a Better Business Bureau (BBB) seal.