FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Space Center Houston and NineSigma Announce Top 20 Teams In the NASA Space Robotics Centennial Challenge
Finalists Progress to Final Phase in the $1 Million Innovation Challenge

HOUSTON, Feb. 7, 2017 — Humanoid robots are one step closer to realizing new capabilities in support of astronauts on the journey to Mars. Today, the science and space learning center Space Center Houston, innovation firm NineSigma and NASA’s Centennial Challenges Program announced the top 20 teams that will move forward into the next phase of the Space Robotics Challenge.

Ninety-two teams from 13 countries completed the initial registration phase to compete in the Space Robotics Challenge, and progressed to the qualifying round. Teams then were tasked with demonstrating a simple technological advancement through two simulation tasks. The results were evaluated by challenge officials, and teams were scored on their demonstration performance. The resulting top 20 teams are now advancing to the Open Practice phase of the Challenge which leads to the virtual competition June 13-16. Winners will be announced by Space Center Houston at the end of June.

“This international competition brings robotics and innovation together to transform lives,” said Space Center Houston’s Director of Education Daniel Newmyer. “Participants are working together to solve real-world problems and contribute to future missions to the red planet.”

Teams came together as groups of friends or professional and academic colleagues and with “day jobs” ranging from high school teacher to data managers and engineers. These top 20 competing teams come from across the United States including Washington, New Jersey, Massachusetts and Texas. They also include teams from Japan, Spain, Canada, United Kingdom and Germany, although teams outside of the U.S. are not eligible for monetary awards per the terms of the competition.

Follow the teams’ progress on Twitter through the hashtag #spaceroboticschallenge and the challenge website hosted on NineSigma’s Open Innovation community at www.NineSights.com.

The Space Robotics Challenge is part of the NASA Centennial Challenges Program, which was created to further NASA’s journey to Mars while helping America maintain its technology leadership. The challenge focuses on developing software to increase the autonomy of dexterous mobile robots, including NASA’s humanoid Robonaut 5 (also known as Valkyrie), either in transit or on other planets. With the technology generated by this challenge, robots could participate in precursor missions to selected landing sites, arriving before astronauts to prepare habitats, life support systems, communications and solar apparatuses, and even begin preliminary scientific research.

NASA will talk about the current state of space exploration robots in an upcoming Webinar titled “Coworkers with Batteries: Space Exploration Robots.” Register at https://spaceroboticschallenge.eventbrite.com for this informational webinar to be held Wednesday, Feb. 15 at 1 p.m. CST.

For more information, please go to www.spaceroboticschallenge.com and www.spacecenter.org.
About NineSigma
NineSigma connects organizations with external innovation resources to accelerate innovation in private, public and social sectors. NineSigma has the largest open global network of solution providers and an extensive database of existing solutions spanning numerous industries and technical disciplines. Learn more at www.ninesigma.com or www.ninesights.com.

About Space Center Houston

The Manned Space Flight Education Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit science and space learning center with extensive educational programs. Space Center Houston is the cornerstone of its mission to inspire all generations through the wonders of space exploration. The center draws more than 1 million visitors annually, was called “The Big Draw” by USA Today and generates a $73 million annual economic impact in the greater Houston area. Space Center Houston is Houston’s first and only Smithsonian Affiliate and the Official Visitor Center of NASA Johnson Space Center. More than 175,000 teachers and students from around the world visit the center annually to take part in extraordinary learning opportunities. For more information, go to www.spacecenter.org.

About NASA
The National Aeronautics and Space Administration is an independent government agency responsible for the civilian space program, as well as aeronautics and aerospace research. NASA’s goal is to extend our senses to see the farthest reaches of the universe, while pushing the boundaries of human spaceflight farther from Earth than ever before. The Centennial Challenges program is part of the agency’s Space Technology Mission Directorate. Through public challenges, STMD gathers the best and brightest minds in academia, industry and government to drive innovation and enable solutions in important technology focus areas. Learn more at www.nasa.winit.

Press Contacts
Bronwyn Monroe, NineSigma, monroe@ninesigma.com, 216-295-4800

Meridyth Moore, Space Center Houston, mmoore@spacecenter.org, 281-244-2139

Molly Porter, NASA Centennial Challenges, molly.a.porter@nasa.gov, 256-544-0034