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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SCIENCE ACADEMY RELEASES REPORT ON STEM EDUCATION IN WA

OLYMPIA -- The Washington State Academy of Sciences (WSAS) today released ***STEM Education in Washington State: The Facts of the Matter***, a summary of its 2011 annual symposium. The report reveals the extent to which Washington State, with its dependence on high-quality, knowledge-intensive jobs, is lagging in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education, relative to its technology peer states and even against all states. "We knew from studies by the National Academies that the U.S. lags behind other developed and many developing countries in STEM education, but had not realized the extent to which Washington lags much of the U.S. in STEM education" said WSAS President Earl Murman, MIT Professor Emeritus and co-author of the report.

"Our symposium was not organized to find solutions to STEM education in Washington," noted co-author R. James Cook, WSAS Past President and Professor Emeritus of WSU. "The symposium was designed for our members to become better informed. What we found out was so surprising and disturbing that we decided to share the ***Facts of the Matter*** with the public."

The report finds that while Washington ranks second only to Massachusetts in the Kauffman Foundation New Economy Index of "leaders of innovation" and second only to Michigan in the percent of the workforce that are engineers, it ranks last among the top ten technology peer states in percentage of 9th graders who proceed to college and graduate within 150% of the normal time, and 9th and 7th, respectively, for the number of engineers and computer scientists it produces compared to the number employed. These facts and many others led WSAS Board Member and UW Professor of Computer Science & Engineering Edward Lazowska to conclude, "too many of the scientists and engineers we hire in Washington are not our own children." Lazowska also commented on Washington's "skills gap" stating "the people that held the jobs we are losing are not going to obtain the jobs we are creating."

The September 22 symposium titled ***Rising Above the Gathering Storm: STEM Education in Washington State*** featured invited speakers including Lazowska, University of Maryland President Emeritus C.D. (Dan) Mote, Washington State Senator Rosemary McAuliffe, Microsoft Senior Vice President Brad Smith, and three prominent Washington faculty members involved in education research. In addition to WSAS members, K-12 teachers and principals, 8-12th grade students, science and engineering fair directors, and members of Washington STEM attended the event held at the Museum of Flight.

Murman remarked that, "we were exposed to many outstanding students, committed and passionate STEM teachers, and volunteers who run outstanding science and engineering fairs. We also heard cutting edge research findings on how to improve STEM education." He continued that, "we saw ample evidence that Washington can excel in STEM education. We need to spread these pockets of excellence throughout the state." The report contains recommendations for how the WSAS can contribute in this respect, and calls for partnerships with other organizations committed to improving STEM education in Washington.

“Much more attention needs to be given to this issue than what the WSAS can do. We – the people of Washington State – cannot make meaningful inroads to addressing this problem until we face up to ***The Facts of the Matter***,” added Murman.

The full report, as well as all the symposium talks and materials, are available on the WSAS website <http://www.washacad.org/>.

About the Washington State Academy of Sciences

The Washington State Academy of Sciences provides expert scientific and engineering analysis to inform public policy-making, and works to increase the role and visibility of science in the State of Washington.