



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Online Earth & Space Science Course Prepares Students for Careers  
In Energy, Environment & Earth Resource Management**

**May 14, 2015, Maynard, MA** – Earth Science prepares students for a growing array of jobs and for understanding crucial issues affecting our society. Yet, 75% of our nation’s students do not take an Earth Science course in high school. To help create a new generation of scientists, environmentally-conscious citizens and bridge this educational gap, The Virtual High School (<http://www.theVirtualHighSchool.org>), a non-profit empowering schools with the industry’s best online learning programs, today announced it will be offering a new online course, *Earth and Space Systems Science*, starting in the fall. In addition, the organization is now campaigning alongside a number of other organizations within the scientific community to make Earth Science a requirement for all high school students nationwide.

“Earth and Space Science is one of the most important and exciting subjects for our students. It provides an unprecedented context for a variety of career paths while immersing students in how to become better stewards of our planet and of our future,” said Jeffery A. Elliott, President & CEO of The Virtual High School (VHS).

Using cutting-edge technology, *Earth and Space Systems Science* makes the subject matter come alive with an exciting and interactive approach to exploring Earth’s atmosphere, hydrosphere, geosphere, cryosphere and biosphere. Throughout the year-long, modular course, students become participants, rather than observers, as they actively perform hands-on investigations in the field and lab, and conduct virtual investigations using online datasets and rich technology tools, such as Google Earth and Geographic Information Systems (GIS). For example, during the Severe Weather module, students use satellite, radar and other data to understand and forecast hurricanes. In other modules, students find themselves designing proposals to search for life elsewhere in the solar system, creating a natural resource map of their local area and even developing a conservation plan to reduce both their electricity use and carbon footprint by at least 10%.

“This course makes Earth Science cutting-edge and forward-looking,” said Elliott. “By foregoing textbooks in lieu of dynamic online resources, interactive investigations and real-world challenges, *Earth and Space Systems Science* moves well beyond the traditional vision of an Earth Science course.”

This innovative course was developed in collaboration with TERC, a non-profit with world-class expertise in STEM curriculum that engages students in inquiry-based investigations. TERC is one of the nation's leading innovators in Earth and space science education. "This course is the culmination of over a decade of research-based curriculum reform in Earth and space science education," said Jeff Lockwood, Director of the course development. "It embodies a grand vision of educational reform – a revolution in the depth and sophistication of this essential high school course."

The VHS mission is to provide students with access to high quality online and blended learning experiences, while supporting educators with the professional development and services they need to provide an effective 21st century education for every student. VHS partner schools have access to a wide range of core, elective, and AP® courses that inspire, ignite and deepen learning as well as enable students to develop independent learning skills, explore college majors and careers, earn credits and participate in global classrooms. Courses are taught by highly qualified teachers who are specially trained in online teaching best practices, and are certified in their subject areas.

Registration began yesterday. As an online course, students anywhere can participate. For more information go to <http://thevhs.org/earthscience>.

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#### About The Virtual High School

The Virtual High School is an online learning pioneer. Since 1996, the nonprofit organization has been setting the standard for quality online education. VHS provides courses taught in global online classrooms for secondary school students and online professional development in 21st century teaching for educators. The organization also meets the unique educational needs of schools through custom course development, individualized course offerings, and support for blended learning initiatives.

VHS' design and delivery standards was the model used by the National Education Association in their recommended standards for online learning. The organization has won numerous awards, including the Stockholm Challenge Award for Global Excellence in Information Technology and is a three-time winner of the United States Distance Learning Association's (USDLA) award for Excellence in Programming and Excellence in Best Practices. For more information, visit [www.TheVirtualHighSchool.org](http://www.TheVirtualHighSchool.org) or call (978) 897-1900.

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