



NEEDHAM HIGH SCHOOL

A CARING COMMUNITY
STRIVING FOR PERSONAL GROWTH AND
ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

September 1, 2026

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of Needham High School I am pleased to express my support for the following Needham High students Hai Dang, Itay Kedem, Karan Krishnan, Christos Kyttaris, Sophie Liu, Alex Shaigorodsky, and Zirui Wang and their participation in the NASA Human Exploration Rover Challenge (HERC).

The team is composed of students with demonstrated experience and interest in engineering, robotics, aerospace, and STEM education. Several members of the team, including Zirui, Christos and Karan previously participated in the MIT Beaver Works Summer Institute (BWSI) CubeSat program and were members of the team that won the national competition. Their prior experience reflects both their technical capabilities and their commitment to collaborative, hands-on engineering.

Through HERC, the students will design, prototype, build, and test a remotely operated lunar rover capable of navigating obstacles representative of extraterrestrial terrain. The team will also address an autonomous image-identification component of the challenge. Participation in this competition will provide students with valuable opportunities to apply concepts from engineering, computer science, robotics, physics, and mathematics to a challenging real-world problem.

We understand that the competition will involve multiple stages through April, beginning with the proposal submission in September and culminating, for qualifying teams, in a final competition at the U.S. Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama. We are supportive of the students' efforts to participate throughout this process and recognize the significant educational value of undertaking a project of this scope.

The students plan to conduct the majority of their design, construction, and testing activities through the DaVinci Workshop, with potential access to additional manufacturing resources through Olin College of Engineering as needed. Mr. Hans Batra will serve as the team's advisor throughout the competition.

Needham High School supports the team's application to the NASA Human Exploration Rover Challenge and is willing to provide reasonable institutional support to enable the students to participate in the competition. We understand that the students are independently pursuing fundraising to cover project materials and potential travel expenses associated with the final competition.

We are proud to support our students as they pursue this opportunity and believe that participation in HERC will encourage technical innovation, teamwork, problem-solving, and continued interest in STEM fields.

Sincerely,

Aaron Sicotte, Principal