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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PROJECT EXPLORATION ENGAGES CHICAGO STUDENTS IN REAL-TIME SCIENCE

CHICAGO— On November 15, 2007, Project Exploration will lead 10 Chicago area high school students and three teachers to join University of Chicago paleontologist Paul Sereno at National Geographic Headquarters in Washington, D.C. to announce a major discovery—the unveiling of a 30-foot long skeleton of a dinosaur from Africa that mowed down ferns some 110 million years ago.

Most students and teachers learn about science by reading about it in textbooks long after the research is complete and published by the press. Usually only academically-elite students and their teachers experience, firsthand, how science works. Project Exploration is charting new strategies for getting students of all backgrounds engaged in science and creating new blueprints for inspiring the next generation of scientists and explorers.

To ready this "*Nigersaurus* Delegation" of scientists-in-the-making, Project Exploration engaged the group in every aspect of the research that led up to the press announcement. Delegates participated in science fieldwork during the summer, toured the fossil lab where the new species was reconstructed, completed a day of training by lead scientists, and studied scientific reports and media alerts before they were released to the public and press.

The delegation will publish their experiences on www.projectexploration.org as part of an interactive website featuring the science of *Nigersaurus*.

Project Exploration, a Chicago nonprofit science education organization, was cofounded in 1999 by University of Chicago paleontologist and Explorer in Residence Paul Sereno, with his wife, educator Gabrielle Lyon. "Participating in science in the making and meeting real scientists is key to getting students interested in science and to *keeping* them interested in science," explains Gabrielle Lyon, who in addition to serving as the Executive Director of Project Exploration, was a member of the team that unearthed *Nigersaurus*.

"I'm so thankful for all the science opportunities that Project Exploration has given me. I'm so excited to go to D.C. to learn about something new in science and that no one else knows about yet," shared Arieshae Parker, DuSable Leadership Academy

Tommie Collins, from ACE Technical High School, reported, "I feel so lucky to be one of only 10 students picked to be a part of such a unique experience and I am excited to work with scientists again."

"This kind of experience is usually limited to an exclusive group of reporters and scientists. Project Exploration is offering students and teachers a unique opportunity to see how science works in real life and how it intersects with fields like writing and communication," said Mike Lach, Director of Science for Chicago Public Schools.

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Helping students personally understand how science works is a critical element in Project Exploration's *Nigersaurus* project which includes a travelling exhibit, professional development for teachers, and the launch of an interactive, content-rich free website.

Project Exploration's website offers the public opportunities to see "science in action" firsthand. The *Nigersaurus* website highlights work by the *Nigersaurus* Delegates, and includes in-depth features with scientists and artists, a photo gallery, interviews, and classroom activities.

During the expedition that unearthed *Nigersaurus* in 2000, Project Exploration's website enabled more than 500 Illinois students to correspond directly with Sereno's expedition team while it was in the field. In addition, 60,000 people from 12 states and 14 countries followed the expedition online as the team faced sandstorms, 130 degree heat, and excavated more than 20,000 tons of fossils.

Project Exploration is a nonprofit science education organization cofounded by Sereno and his wife, educator Gabrielle Lyon, dedicated to making science accessible to the public – especially minority youth and girls – through personalized experiences with science and scientists. Project Exploration works to connect kids and families firsthand with the excitement of scientific discovery with youth development programs such as Sisters4Science and Junior Paleontologists, the Science Teacher Field Institute, and free resources such as "*Discover Your Summer*," a guide to summer science opportunities.

NIGERSAURUS STUDENT DELEGATES

- Clarence Boyles, 10th grade, Perspectives Charter School – Calumet campus
- Tommie Collins, 11th grade, ACE Technical Charter High School
- Cassandra Davis, 10th grade, Young Women's Leadership Charter School
- Quyeisha Dykes, 11th grade, ACE Technical Charter High School
- Clarissa Galvan, 11th grade, Perspectives Charter School – South Loop campus
- Michael Laureano, 10th grade, Noble Street Charter School – Pritzker College Preparatory
- Chuck Mogbo, 11th grade, John Hope College Preparatory High School
- Mariana Maldonado, 10th grade, Noble Street Charter School – Pritzker College Preparatory
- Ariehae Parker, 9th grade, DuSable Leadership Academy
- Miguel Ruiz, 10th grade, Amundsen High School

NIGERSAURUS TEACHER DELEGATES

- Donna Calder, Metcalf Community Academy
- Dimitri Hepburn, Legacy Charter School
- Matthew Knoepke, Homewood-Flossmoor High School

DELEGATION LEADERS

- Gabrielle Lyon, Executive Director, Project Exploration
- Kristin Atman, Program Director, Project Exploration
- Elena Schroeter, Youth Programs Coordinator, Project Exploration