

First Class of Suborbital Scientist-Astronauts Successfully Complete NASTAR Training Program

Washington, D.C., January 14, 2010 – Showcasing the growing interest in conducting research and education missions aboard commercial suborbital spacecraft, eleven researchers including members of the Commercial Spaceflight Federation’s Suborbital Applications Researchers Group (SARG) successfully completed a training program yesterday at The National Aerospace Training and Research (NASTAR) Center in Pennsylvania.

The training included classroom instruction, altitude chamber training, multi-axis centrifuge training for launch and reentry accelerations, and several distraction factor exercises, simulating the conditions that scientist-astronauts will experience during future missions to 100 km altitude.



“For this diverse group of scientists to invest their own time and money for astronaut training is a true testament to the growing excitement behind the science potential of new commercial spacecraft,” said Dr. S. Alan Stern, chairman of SARG and a principal organizer of the scientist training program. “Interest was so high that we’ve already filled up a second class of a dozen scientists for spring 2010.”

“Just as important was the training success rate from this week,” added Stern. “Of the 11 scientists, a diverse group of men and women ranging from 26 to 52 years old, 100% of them passed the centrifuge training, and all but one passed the altitude chamber training. That’s not only impressive, but bodes well for regular researchers being able to accompany their laboratory equipment to space in the years to come.”

“We are constantly impressed with the enthusiasm of the scientific community for the potential of next-generation commercial reusable spacecraft, such as those being developed by Armadillo Aerospace, Blue Origin, Masten Space Systems, Virgin Galactic, and XCOR Aerospace,” added John Gedmark, Executive Director of the Commercial Spaceflight Federation. “We’ve had tremendous interest at recent science workshops we’ve conducted at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, the American Geophysical Union annual conference, and the Aerospace Medical Association annual conference, with over 150 scientists attending in total.”

Brienna Henwood, Business Development and Program Manager for Space and Research at The NASTAR Center, stated, “I am thrilled to add the Suborbital Scientist Course to our current offerings. The course is more than just physiology training, it provides an overview about suborbital research and is ideal for anyone interested in learning more about the growing opportunities that rest within the commercial spaceflight industry.”

Institutions sending researchers, students and graduate students to the inaugural program included Southwest Research Institute (SwRI), Boston University, the Denver Museum of Natural Sciences (DMNS), the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory (APL), the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the University of Central Florida (UCF) and the Universities Space Research Association (USRA).

About the Commercial Spaceflight Federation

The mission of the Commercial Spaceflight Federation (CSF) is to promote the development of commercial human spaceflight, pursue ever higher levels of safety, and share best practices and expertise throughout the industry. CSF member organizations include commercial spaceflight developers, operators, and spaceports. The Commercial Spaceflight Federation is governed by a board of directors, composed of the member companies' CEO-level officers and entrepreneurs. For more information please visit www.commercialspaceflight.org or contact Executive Director John Gedmark at john@commercialspaceflight.org or at 202.349.1121.

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