

## **New Flight Opportunity for School Districts: Announcing Student Spaceflight Experiment Program (SSEP) Mission 11 to the International Space Station, Starting September 2016**

### **Opportunity for Schools to Engage Grade 5-16 Students in the Design of Microgravity Experiments for Flight to the International Space Station**



### **STEM Project-Based Learning Through Immersion in an Authentic Research Experience**

#### **For Immediate Release**

**March 30, 2016**

If you have a PDF of this document, for active links, go to: <http://ssep.ncesse.org/?p=21195>

**Time Critical:** interested districts, schools, colleges, and informal STEM education organizations are directed to inquire about the program **no later than April 29, 2016 – EXTENDED to May 27, 2016**

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Washington, D.C. - The [National Center for Earth and Space Science Education \(NCESSE\)](#), and the [Arthur C. Clarke Institute for Space Education](#), in partnership with [NanoRacks LLC](#), announce a new opportunity for school districts across the U.S., Canada, and internationally to participate in the thirteenth flight opportunity of the Student Spaceflight Experiments Program (SSEP).

Launched in June 2010, SSEP was designed as a model U.S. National STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) education program that immerses typically 300 students across a community in every facet of authentic scientific research of their own design, using a highly captivating spaceflight opportunity on the International Space Station (ISS).

The program is designed to inspire and engage the next generation of scientists and engineers, and is accomplished by providing each participating community their own very real Space Program.

SSEP Mission 11 to ISS will provide each participating community a real research mini-laboratory capable of supporting a single microgravity experiment, and all launch services to fly the mini-lab to ISS in Spring 2017, and return it safely to Earth for harvesting and analysis. Mirroring how professional research is done, student teams across the community submit research proposals, and go through a formal proposal review process to select the flight experiment. The design competition – from program start, to experiment design, to submission of proposals by student teams – spans 9 weeks from September 6 to November 4, 2016. A curriculum and content resources for teachers and students support foundational instruction on science conducted in microgravity (in a weightless environment) and experiment design. Additional SSEP program elements leverage the experience to engage the entire community, embracing a [Learning Community Model for STEM education](#).

SSEP provides seamless integration across STEM disciplines through an authentic, high visibility research experience—an approach that embraces the Next Generation Science Standards. For school districts—even individual schools—SSEP provides an opportunity to implement a systemic, high caliber STEM education

program tailored to community need. More broadly, SSEP is about a commitment to student ownership in exploration, to science as journey, and to the joys of learning.

SSEP is open to U.S. schools and school districts serving grade 5 through 12 students, 2- and 4-year colleges and universities, informal science education organizations, and internationally through the Center's [Arthur C. Clarke Institute for Space Education](#). SSEP is not designed for an individual class or a small number of students in a community.

Student teams are able to design experiments across diverse fields, including: seed germination, crystal growth, physiology and life cycles of microorganisms, cell biology and growth, food studies, and studies of micro-aquatic life. Experiments require design to the technology and engineering constraints imposed by the mini-laboratory, and flight operations to and from low Earth orbit.

“SSEP is designed to empower the student as scientist, and within the real-world context of science. Student teams design a real experiment, propose for a real flight opportunity, experience a formal proposal review, and go through a NASA flight safety review. They even have their own science conference at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, where they are immersed in their own community of researchers”, said Dr. Jeff Goldstein, creator of SSEP and NCSSE Center Director. “SSEP is about introducing real science to our children and if you give them a chance to be scientists, stand back and be amazed.”

SSEP Mission 11 to ISS includes an experiment design competition September 6 through November 4, 2016. Flight experiments are selected by December 15, 2016, for a ferry flight to ISS in Spring 2017. All communities interested in participating in Mission 11 to ISS are directed to inquire no later than May 27, 2016.

**Heritage:** There have been 12 SSEP flight opportunities to date—SSEP on STS-134 and STS-135, the final flights of Space Shuttles Endeavour and Atlantis; and SSEP Missions 1 through 10 to ISS. A total of 134 communities have participated in the program, reflecting 36 States and the District of Columbia in the U. S. and 4 Provinces in Canada. Thus far 28 communities have participated in multiple flight opportunities, reflecting the sustainable nature of the program.

Through the first 11 flight opportunities, a total of 61,150 grade 5-16 students were fully immersed in microgravity experiment design and proposal writing, 13,617 flight experiment proposals were received from student teams, and 174 experiments were selected for flight.

A total of 113 experiments have flown through SSEP Mission 6. Another 61 experiments are expected to launch in 2016: 25 experiments as the Mission 7 Odyssey II payload on SpaceX-8, 15 experiments as the Mission 8 Kitty Hawk payload on SpaceX-9, and 21 experiments as the Endeavor payload on SpaceX-10 – all three launching from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, FL, adjoining Kennedy Space Center. On February 22, 2016, 4,800 grade 5-16 students across 11 communities in the U.S. and Canada began program operations for Mission 10 to ISS.

SSEP is the first pre-college STEM education program that is both a U.S. national initiative and implemented as an on-orbit commercial space venture. SSEP is undertaken by the [National Center for Earth and Space Science Education \(NCSSE\)](#) in the U.S. and the [Arthur C. Clarke Institute for Space Education](#) internationally. It is enabled through a strategic partnership with [NanoRacks LLC](#), working with NASA under a Space Act Agreement as part of the utilization of the International Space Station as a National Laboratory.

The [Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum](#), [Center for the Advancement of Science in Space \(CASIS\)](#), and [Subaru of America, Inc.](#), are U.S. National Partners on the Student Spaceflight Experiments Program. [Magellan Aerospace](#) is a Canadian National Partner on the Student Spaceflight Experiments Program.

**For information on the Mission 11 to ISS flight opportunity, and to get a detailed understanding of the program, read the SSEP Home Page: <http://ssep.ncesse.org>**

#### About NCSSE

The [National Center for Earth and Space Science Education \(NCSSE\)](http://ncesse.org) creates and oversees national initiatives addressing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education, with a focus on earth and space. Programs are designed to provide an authentic window on science as a human endeavor. Central objectives of the Center's programs are to help ensure a scientifically literate public and a next generation of U.S. scientists and engineers - both of which are of national importance in an age of high technology. NCSSE is a division of the 501(c)(3) Tides Center. <http://ncesse.org>

#### About Arthur C. Clarke Institute for Space Education

The [Arthur C. Clarke Institute for Space Education](http://clarkeinstitute.org) is dedicated to delivering education programs world-wide that address our planet, its health, and our ability to venture beyond Earth and understand our place in a greater cosmos. The international arm of the NCSSE in the U.S., the Institute recognizes that all humanity is on a journey aboard spaceship Earth, that the story of our existence knows no national borders, and it should be the birthright for all our children to understand that the explorer lives within them. It is with profound honor and a deep sense of purpose that we continue Sir Arthur C. Clarke's legacy. <http://clarkeinstitute.org>

#### About NanoRacks, LLC

[NanoRacks LLC](http://www.nanoracks.com) was formed in 2009 to provide commercial hardware and services for the U.S. National Laboratory onboard the International Space Station via a Space Act Agreement with NASA. To date over 200 payloads have been deployed by the Company on the International Space Station. NanoRacks' main office is in Houston, Texas, right alongside the NASA Johnson Space Center. Visit [www.nanoracks.com](http://www.nanoracks.com) and [@NanoRacks](https://twitter.com/NanoRacks) on Twitter

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