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NASA astronaut to launch students' experiments into space at Curtin

MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 2 July 2019

NASA astronaut and International Space Station Commander Steve Swanson will touch down at Curtin University this month for the Mission Discovery program, which aims to attract high school students to the science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields.

Held at Curtin University – and in Western Australia for the first time from July 8 to 12, the innovative and inspiring event will give students the rare opportunity to work in teams under the guidance of Mr Swanson and Curtin's own esteemed scientists.

Professor Gretchen Benedix, from Curtin's School of Earth and Planetary Sciences, said each team would design an original experiment to be carried out in microgravity conditions on the International Space Station, with the winning team's experiment to be launched and carried into space.

"This is an incredible opportunity for local high school students to spend a week learning from a NASA astronaut and engineer who among his many experiences has spent 200 days in orbit working on a space station," Professor Benedix said.

"In small groups, students will take on the role of research scientists and design their own space experiment, with the winning team's experiment built and sent by NASA to the International Space Station where it will be tested.

"The Mission Discovery program allows students to learn about STEM with hands-on activities, developing their leadership, teamwork and innovation skills while learning about space and science career paths."

A cosmic mineralogist and astro-geologist, Professor Benedix will speak to program participants about working as a planetary science researcher, as part of a panel showcasing women scientists at Curtin who study Mars.

The panel will also include fellow Curtin University Space Science and Technology Centre researcher planetary scientist Dr Katarina Miljkovic who will discuss her involvement in NASA's [Mars InSight Mission](https://news.curtin.edu.au/media-releases/curtin-researcher-australian-working-nasas-mars-mission/) (<https://news.curtin.edu.au/media-releases/curtin-researcher-australian-working-nasas-mars-mission/>) and other space missions.

As part of Mission Discovery, Curtin will also host an interactive discussion for the general public on July 10, when Mr Swanson will share his personal insights about life in space and the exciting future of space exploration.

The public event will be held on Wednesday, July 10, from 6pm to 8pm at the Elizabeth Jolley Lecture Theatre at Curtin's Bentley Campus. Register [here](#)

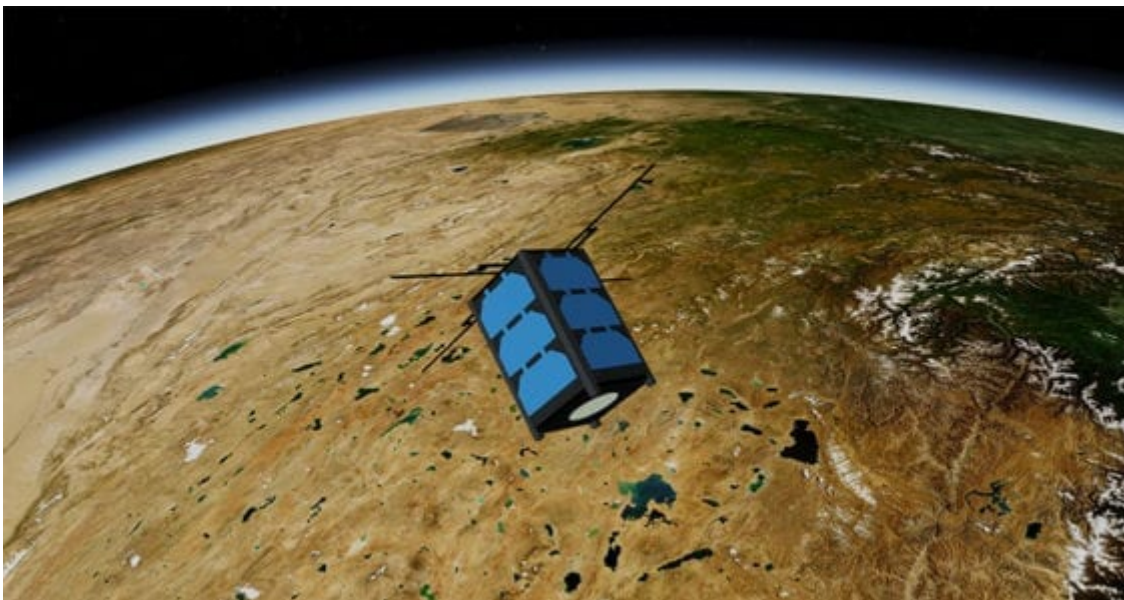
(<https://news.curtin.edu.au/events/q-and-a-nasa-steve-swanson/>).

Mission Discovery was launched in 2012 by UK charity the International Space School Education Trust, with programs having since been held on four continents and involving more than 6000 students who have sent 20 experiments into space on six different rockets.

In 2018, Mission Discovery was brought to Australia for the first time by Latitude Group Travel and this year will be the first time it is held in Western Australia.

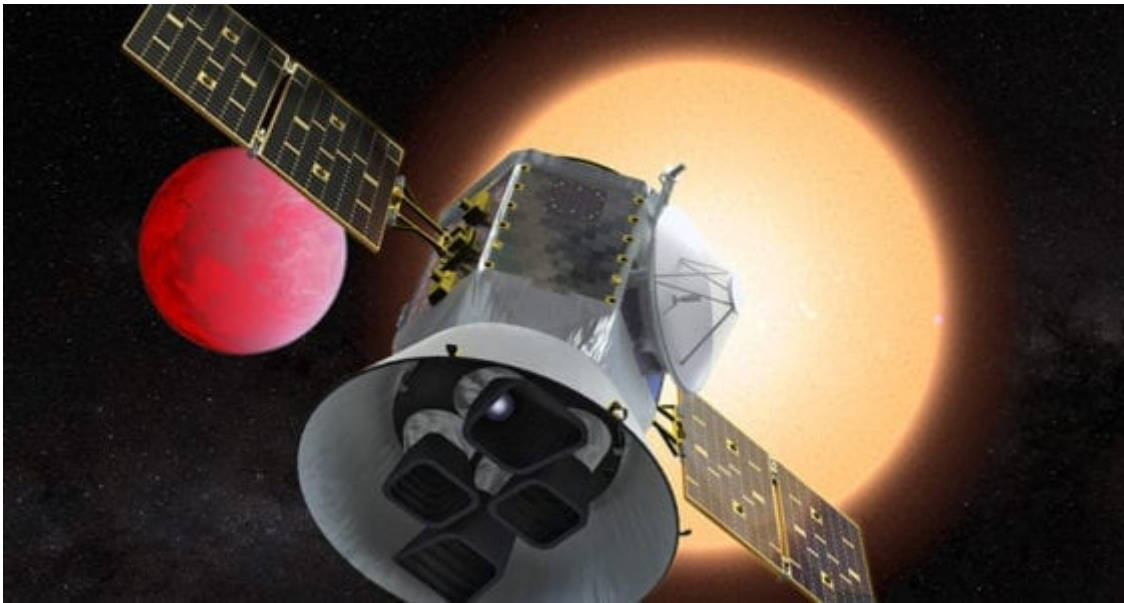
Each student team is assigned a mentor who will help the group throughout the program. Students also participate in team challenges designed to improve their ability to work well in a team, to budget, plan, and design a project, and to deliver a persuasive presentation. Through the program, students develop valuable skills, such as creativity, critical thinking and leadership skills.

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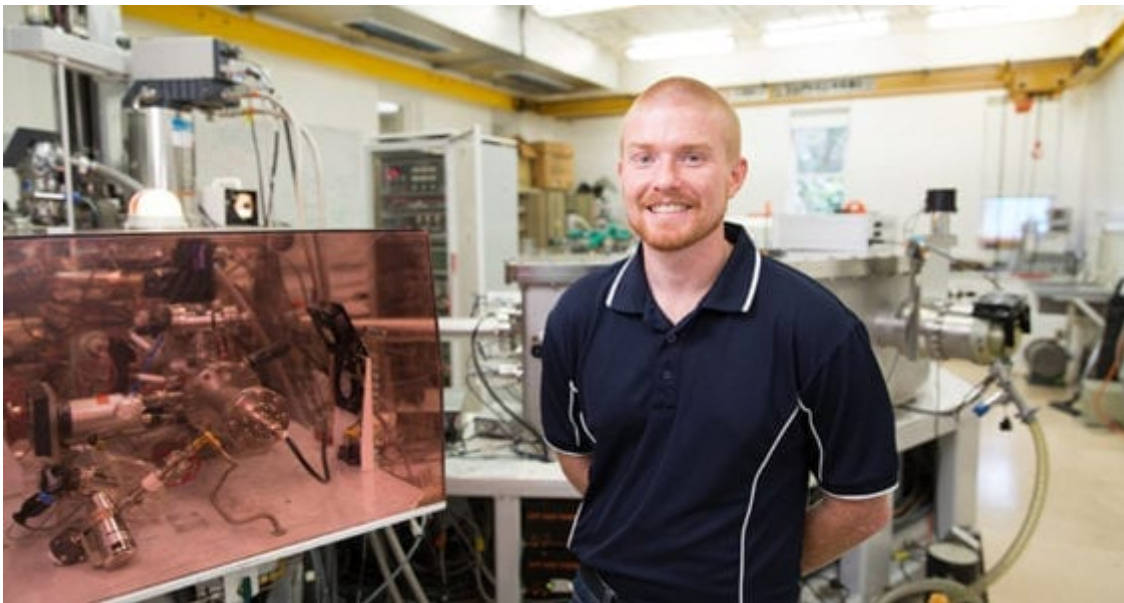
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