Get Away Special program puts experiments in space

By ALISON BALMAT
Collegian Staff Writer

As John Glenn prepares to blast off on the shuttle Discovery today, a team of Penn State students will be finalizing details on experiments that will rocket into space in the near future.

Working in cooperation with the NASA Get Away Special program, 45 graduate and undergraduate students have assembled three payloads, or canisters, with experiments to be tested in space this spring.

"This is a great opportunity," said Jason Soloff (senior-electrical engineering), assistant payload manager of Penn State's Get Away Special program. "It gives you some real-world experience with cutting-edge stuff."

The first experiment will grow plants in space, testing their ability to develop and germinate normally.

Edie Sears (graduate-agricultural and biological engineering) is the payload manager of Penn State's Get Away Special program and the head of the germination project. She hopes the experiment will bring new insight into the biology-space relationship.

"If we're ever going to colonize the moon or planet, we can't do it without plants," she said.

When the shuttle hits 50,000 feet above the
Rich Schaller (senior-electrical engineering) wires a circuit board into an experimental module for NASA’s Get Away Special program in EE East. The program’s participants hope their experiments will be part of a space shuttle mission sometime this spring.

Atmosphere, a second experiment aboard will be activated to map the earth’s magnetosphere. A third trial will measure the impact and force of orbital debris, such as meteors.

Penn State has sent experiments into space on two prior occasions, yet glitches caused both missions to fail. After working on this project for two years, these students are ready to see their work pay off.

"We're building on a lot of mistakes. Hopefully by the time ours is up there, it will be a success," Rich Schaller (senior-electrical engineering) said.

In 1982, the program began as a way to utilize extra cargo space in shuttles while creating opportunities for experimentation in space.

To date, 152 Get Away Special payloads have flown, with about one-half of those payloads coming from universities, said Dave Wilcox, NASA Get Away Special mission manager. More than 400 organizations are on the waiting list to fly their payloads in space.

Wilcox said flight opportunities are the breeding ground for bigger and better things for experiments and experimenters.

"(NASA) wants to give more flight opportunities to the educational community," he said.

To encourage university participation, NASA charges them just $10,000 per canister, whereas private industries must pay $27,000. Lockheed Martin helps fund a large portion of the fee for Penn State.

"I think (the program) offers a very low-cost, hands-on opportunity for students to participate in the space program," Wilcox said.

Keith Soldavin (senior-electrical engineering), debris experiment team leader, has been wanting to do research like this his whole life.

"We get to hob-knob with NASA engineers and get to build something practical instead of just theory in classes," he said.
Send an **Opinion Letter to the Editor** about this article.

[Print page][E-mail page]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>auto insurance</th>
<th>mortgage refinance</th>
<th>car insurance quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounting Schools &amp; Degrees Online</td>
<td>University of Phoenix Online Information</td>
<td>VNUS Closure - Treatment of Varicose Veins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Masters Degrees</td>
<td>Colleges in Chicago Illinois</td>
<td>Online MBA Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADT Security Systems &amp; Alarms</td>
<td>Motorcycle Mechanics Institute</td>
<td>Culinary Schools &amp; Culinary Colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interior Design Schools &amp; Colleges</td>
<td>Online Masters Degree Programs</td>
<td>Swimming Pool Contractors &amp; Builders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automotive Schools</td>
<td>Fashion Design Schools</td>
<td>Online Degrees &amp; Colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interior Design Schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wholesale liquid vitamins</th>
<th>Concert Tickets</th>
<th>Ticket Broker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Home Security Camera</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**TOP HOME**

NEWS  SPORTS  OPINIONS  ARTS  WEATHER  CALENDAR

CLASSIFIEDS  MAGAZINE  SCI-HEALTH

Web Features  About Us  Contact Us  Links  Back Issues  About RSS Feeds

Copyright © 2007 Collegian Inc.

Updated: 1998-10-29 0:55:56 -4
Created: 1998-10-29 0:37:07 -4