

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

New Center: More Jobs, Investment in Space Research for Central Florida

ORLANDO, Feb. 27. -- More jobs and economic investment may be coming to Central Florida thanks to the creation of the new Center for Microgravity Research and Education.

The center (microgravity.physics.ucf.edu) will conduct fundamental research in ground-based laboratories, on parabolic microgravity airplane flights, with a laboratory drop tower, and on suborbital rocket flights. The center will also develop experiments for the International Space Station.

“If we're going to be exploring and operating equipment and scientific instruments on environments such as the moon or asteroids, it's essential to understand how things behave in that low-gravity environment,” said Joshua Colwell, the director of the center and an associate professor of physics at UCF.

The center will establish Central Florida and the Space Coast as a national leader in scientific utilization of the emerging commercial suborbital launch industry. Its facilities are at the Kennedy Space Center's Space Life Sciences Laboratory and the University of Central Florida's Orlando campus.

“We are excited about the fact that the establishment of a nationally recognized institution for microgravity research will attract investment to Florida and stimulate job creation,” said Space Florida president Frank DiBello.

Space Florida is an Independent Special District of the State of Florida, created for the purposes of fostering the growth and development of a sustainable and world-leading space industry in Florida. Space Florida and the University of Central Florida jointly funded the establishment of the center.

The center adds to the growing powerhouse of agencies in Central Florida aimed at making Central Florida a leader in both orbital and suborbital scientific research. KSC Space Life Sciences Lab already houses offices of the Center for the Advancement of Science in Space (CASIS), the non-profit entity selected by NASA to maximize utilization of the International Space Station U.S. National Laboratory.

Research on the physics of granular media and the formation of planets is already under way. Other areas of research that the center will pursue include life sciences, validation of space hardware and space operations, crystal growth, fluid physics, and evolution of the dusty surfaces of asteroids and small moons.

The center will also engage in educational activities and public outreach. Frequent opportunities will be provided to researchers, educators, students, and the public to view research taking place at either of the center locations. Center faculty members and

students conduct professional development workshops for K-12 science teachers. In addition, select UCF faculty and student researchers will make regular, on-site presentations regarding gravity/microgravity implications and experiment potential to both educational and STEM-based organizations throughout Florida.

About Space Florida: Space Florida was created to strengthen Florida's position as the global leader in aerospace research, investment, exploration and commerce. As Florida's aerospace-development organization, we are committed to attracting and expanding the next generation of space-industry businesses. With its highly trained workforce, proven infrastructure and unparalleled record of achievement, Florida is the ideal location for aerospace businesses to thrive – and Space Florida is the perfect partner to help them succeed. www.spaceflorida.gov.

UCF Stands For Opportunity --The University of Central Florida is a metropolitan research university that ranks as the second largest in the nation with more than 58,000 students. UCF's first classes were offered in 1968. The university offers impressive academic and research environments that power the region's economic development. UCF's culture of opportunity is driven by our diversity, Orlando environment, history of entrepreneurship and our youth, relevance and energy. For more information visit <http://news.ucf.edu>

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