

Utah State Partners with NASA and Sen. Orrin Hatch for Live Feed from Space

Friday, May. 19, 2017



Students participating in Utah State University's Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) listens to International Space Station Commander Peggy Whitson and Flight Engineer Jack Fischer at USU's Space Dynamics Laboratory. USU's GEAR UP program and SDL collaborated with U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch and NASA to provide a live conversation between astronauts currently aboard the ISS and more than 250 students from across Utah on May 19, 2017. [Photo Credit: Utah State



A student participating in Utah State University's Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) exits the stage after asking a question of International Space Station astronauts, Peggy Whitson and Flight Engineer Jack Fischer. USU's GEAR UP program and Space Dynamics Laboratory collaborated with U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch and NASA to provide a live conversation between astronauts currently aboard the ISS and more than 250 students from across Utah on May 19, 2017. [Ph

Utah State University's Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) program and Space Dynamics Laboratory have partnered with U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch and NASA to provide a live conversation between astronauts currently aboard the International Space Station and more than 200 students from across Utah. The downlink occurred at 10:40 a.m. (MDT), Friday May 19. The 20-minute Earth-to-space call aired live on NASA Television and the agency's website.

All participating students came from middle schools and high schools throughout Utah and are focusing their education on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM).

"Our students participated in a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to communicate with astronauts in space," Hatch said. "This historic event was the culmination of months of hard work and coordination between my office and our friends at NASA. Utah has long been a key contributor to NASA missions, and Utah State is one of the leading space-grant universities. That's why I have fought to improve our space exploration capabilities throughout my Senate service. It's an honor that our state was chosen to host this special event, which will only strengthen the natural partnership between Utah's STEM workforce and the US space program."

Orbiting approximately 250 miles above Earth, Expedition 51 Commander Peggy Whitson and Flight Engineer Jack Fischer answered questions from middle and high school students throughout Utah during a live downlink transmission to the SDL's Robert F. Bennett Research Laboratory, where the students interacted with the astronauts. Students who participated in the NASA downlink at SDL are from the following schools:

Dual Immersion Academy – Salt Lake City
InTech Collegiate High School – North Logan, Utah
Logan High School – Logan, Utah
Mount Logan Middle School – Logan, Utah
North Sanpete Middle School – Moroni, Utah
Uintah High School – Vernal, Utah
Wendover High School – Wendover, Utah

Students from *Edith Bowen Laboratory School* in Logan, Utah, *Ephraim Middle School* in Ephraim, Utah, and *Wendover Junior High School*, Wendover, Utah, watched a live feed from the ISS on NASA TV.

“The importance of STEM education in Utah, and across our nation, is highlighted by the amazing job NASA does to consistently engage with students at an early age,” said Beth Foley, dean of USU’s Emma Eccles Jones College of Education & Human Services. “We are grateful for the leadership of both Senator Hatch and NASA who have enabled us to reach STEM students throughout Utah with this unique opportunity to ask questions of Dr. Whitson and Colonel Fischer.”

GEAR UP is a federally funded grant program whose goal is to increase college awareness for low-income students and their families and to help students develop the skills and preparation necessary to pursue education after high school. GEAR UP works collaboratively with schools, parents and community organizations to help students build the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to prepare for college. GEAR UP provides staff and funding resources in a comprehensive program.

“There are few better ways for students to become excited about STEM education than talking to, and watching, astronauts who are currently in orbit,” said Niel Holt, director of the Space Dynamics Laboratory. “SDL is honored to work with NASA on current programs and on numerous missions over the past five decades. It is critical that we energize the next generation of engineers and scientists so that we can continue to seek understanding of the origins, evolution, and destiny of the universe.”

As a nonprofit unit of the Utah State University Research Foundation, SDL has been solving the technical challenges faced by the military, science community, and industry since 1959. SDL is one of 14 University Affiliated Research Centers that provide and maintain core capabilities for the Department of Defense. SDL’s core competencies include electro-optical sensor systems research and development; ground, airborne, and space rated instruments and payloads development, test and evaluation, integration, validation, and operations; data compression/decompression and data visualization for sensor analysis, data exploitation and data fusion; phenomenology measurements modeling and simulation; sensor modeling and simulation; and small/micro satellite sensor systems and components. For more information, visit www.sdl.usu.edu.

The Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services is committed to quality teaching, outreach and research. Its programs are strengthened by an on-campus elementary school and three stand-alone centers. These offer services to the community and provide students with real-world service and research opportunities. Additional community services are provided by the eight individual departments within the CEHS. The CEHS graduate programs are ranked best in the state and 26th the nation among colleges of education, according to U.S. News and World Report.

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