

Student science experiment heading to International Space Station

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The Innovation Office of Ector County ISD announced Tuesday that for the third time ECISD students will send a **science experiment to the International Space Station (ISS)** through the **Student Spaceflight Experiments Program (SSEP) Mission 16**.

SSEP is an **international** competition that allows fifth through 12th grade students **to** design authentic experiments for microgravity environments. SSEP mirrors how professional scientists work by having **student** teams write research proposals that are evaluated by panels of experts, a news release said.

The winning **experiment** proposal from ECISD is Swetha Kesavan's proposal studying biofilm in microgravity. Her **experiment** will undergo further testing on Earth and a final flight safety review before launching **to** the ISS later this year. Kesavan, a senior at Permian High School, is working with her teacher facilitator, Gregorio Barajas- Mercado and two faculty from the University of Texas Permian Basin Biology department, Paula Gutierrez and Joanna Hernandez, on this **experiment** proposal and research.

For this year's Mission 16 competition, 23 communities from all over the United States, as well as Canada and Ukraine submitted entries. The winning **experiment** from each SSEP community will be ferried **to** the **International Space Station**, and the **experiment** will be operated by the astronauts in a microgravity environment, the release said.

Ground control experiments will be conducted by the students on Earth, and then the students will analyze the results from the two experiments. Participating students will also have the opportunity **to** present their research at the SSEP National Conference during the summer of 2022 planned **to** be held at the Smithsonian National Air and **Space** Museum.

The two other **experiment** proposals selected as finalists for ECISD Mission 16 were:

>> "What Will be the Effect of Microgravity in the Reaction of Calcium and Citric Acid?" (Nimitz Middle School, seventh graders Ava Alderson and Zoey Terrazas and eighth

grader Miguel Iniguez, facilitated by **science** teacher Azul Purcell).

>> "Tardigrade Reproductive Rates in Microgravity" (Nimitz Middle School, seventh graders Kimberly Espinoza, Mohammed Rehan Latheef Adam, and Mateo Sanchez, facilitated by **science** teacher Azul Purcell).

ECISD students previously sent **science** experiments **to** the ISS on Mission 12 which flew in 2018 and Mission 13 which flew in 2019.

An additional component of SSEP is the Mission Patch competition. Students in all grade levels can participate in SSEP by creating mission patch art. Two mission patches will fly **to** the ISS with the winning team's **experiment**, and return **to** Earth certified as flown in **space**.

Ector County ISD wishes **to** thank UTPB, Sibley Nature Center, and Odessa Regional Medical Center for participation on the local review panel. Funding for ECISD's participation in SSEP Mission 16 was provided by Chevron, the Education Foundation of Odessa, and a grant from the Texas **Space** Grant Consortium.

The **Student** Spaceflight Experiments Program [or just "SSEP"] is a program of the National Center for Earth and **Space Science** Education (NCESSSE) in the U.S. and the Arthur C. Clarke Institute for **Space** Education Internationally. It is enabled through a strategic partnership with Nanoracks, LLC, which is working with NASA under a **Space** Act Agreement as part of the utilization of the **International Space Station** as a National Laboratory.



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