

Falcon students working out details for space experiment

Falcon Early College High School sophomore Deidre Morales squeezes water into a container that will hold the bacteria as fellow students Francis Dapanas and Juan Mendoza help out.

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Falcon Early College High School students got some guidance from University of Texas of the Permian Basin Lab Director Joanna Hernandez as they continue work on the final stage of their experiment that is in NASA's Flight Safety Review.

The experiment will be conducted on the International Space Station. Falcon Early College High School AVID Coordinator Elizabeth Gray said the experiment looks at whether bacteria that degrades plastic will work the same way in microgravity as it does on "It's been officially chosen," Gray said as students worked in a lab at the university's Science and Technology Building. "Now we're in the steps where we have to finalize all the volumes of all components of the experiment and then we have to do some trial runs to make sure that our experiment is going to work up in the International Space Station."

Their work Monday morning was part of that process.

"We have a deadline of tomorrow (Jan. 30) to figure out the maximum volumes of all the components because between now and the other deadline before launch we can decrease volumes, but we can't increase anything," Gray said.

A group of 13 students from Falcon will head to Washington, D.C., sometime in June along with four chaperones.

Their proposal, "The Efficacy of Ideonella Sakaiensis in a Microgravity

Environment" will look at how the bacteria will decompose poly (ethylene terephthalate) in microgravity and compare it to Earth. Poly (ethylene terephthalate) or PET is used in fibers for clothing and containers for liquids and foods.

The results will be forward to the Student Spaceflight Experiments Program (SSEP) committee.

The SSEP team at Falcon includes: 10th graders Deidre Morales, Devin Arriaga, Fabian Carrasco, Francis Dapanas and Mason Driggers.

Also, 11th grader Faith Eleby, Damien Galindo, 10th grade; Kobe Hernandez, 11th grade; Wendy Hernandez, 10th grade; Leodegario Lopez, ninth grade; Juan Mendoza, 10th grade; Yazlin Romero, 10th grade; Gracielle Velasco, 10th grade.

Gray said the proposal was Morales' idea.

Morales said it was an amazing experience to see something that started off as an idea actually come to life.

"I think it's awesome because I guess we get to work with NASA," Mendoza said. "That's something that a lot of people don't get to do. It's so awesome we're doing it as teenagers."



Earth.

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