

## Ad Astra Kansas Newsletter



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Winter 2025/2026

# Scholarships open until 3-1

An advertisement for Ad Astra Kansas Foundation Undergraduate &amp; Graduate Scholarships. The text on the ad includes: "Ad Astra Kansas Foundation", "Undergraduate &amp; Graduate Scholarships", "You may be Eligible if:", a bulleted list with "Enrolled in a Kansas college for Fall" and "Interested in space exploration", "Deadline: March 1, 2026", and a QR code. The background of the ad is a dark blue with a starry texture.

Studying (or planning to study) a career in space exploration, rocketry, astronomy, robotics or a related STEM field at a Kansas institution? There's still time to apply.

**Grants are:**

**\*\$1,000 for a graduate student**  
**\*\$1,000 for a full-time undergrad**  
**\*\$500 for an incoming freshman**  
Scan the QR code for information and to apply.  
Questions? Contact Sarah Lamm at [contact@adastra-ks.org](mailto:contact@adastra-ks.org)



## Lunar hackathon winners tackle micro-food production

WICHITA-- Micro-food production on the Moon was the challenge tackled by winners of the high-intensity 48-hour lunar hackathon hosted November 7-9 by WSU's College of Innovation and Design in partnership with Lockheed Martin Skunk Works.

The task was to develop solutions for real engineering problems currently being explored by NASA and Lockheed Martin in prep for establishing a future lunar base.

The winners, Team Space Volcano Sun, consisted of WSU applied engineering and engineering students (l.to r.) Spencer MacLaughlin, Danny Ball and Marcell Lozano (who are all also Cowley College alumni) as well as WSU engineering majors Jose Reyes and Jose Michel.

Their innovative prototype focused on creating sporeless oyster mushrooms designed for a semi-autonomous hydroponics system.

The team engineered a system equipped with temperature and humidity sensors powered by an Arduino microcontroller, along with integrated air and water filtration to minimize contamination risk.

According to Ball, "We wanted to emphasize low maintenance in our micro-food production design so we chose mushrooms because they don't require light to grow (low energy), mushrooms can also be harvested over and over (continuous crop to a degree), and we chose spore-less so that these mushrooms would not contaminate the air in case of this closed system being breached. The idea would be for an astronaut to plant the mushrooms, put in the right amount of water, and then come back a few days later and harvest mushrooms over and over again." *Photo credit: press release Cowley College*

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## All systems will be "GO"

If the Artemis II mission goes according to schedule, liftoff will be Sunday, February 8, with backup windows of February 10-11. The 10-day mission will launch four astronauts in a flight around the Moon in an Orion capsule. This will be the first crewed Moon mission since 1973.

Find live broadcasts of the launch on [NASA+](#) and on [NASA's YouTube CHANNEL](#).

If February does not work, there are two other launch windows—

one in March and one in April.

*Photo credit: NASA*



## Join us at the capitol Feb. 4

We'll let you in on our plans for 2026. This will be our third annual event. Also learn about the Interstellar University project.



## Counting down to fun

2026 will be our 16th Space Celebration with a 250th twist!! Watch for details on our facebook page and our website [www.adastrakansas.org](http://www.adastrakansas.org).

# Introduce your concept



For those interested in the mysteries, challenges and rewards of human space exploration, this compact non-technical (minimal long-equations) seminar speaks to the curious in an approachable and authentic way via scientists in the midst of the research. Use QR code to register

## Content

**WHERE WE GO:** Intro to Interstellar / Stars and distance / Previous interstellar missions / Exoplanets / Planetary protection / SETI

**HOW WE GET THERE:** Conventional and advanced propulsion / Regenerative resupply / Life-support systems / Human habitats / Space suits / Radiation / Crew health--psychology / Space medicine

**SPACE HUMANITIES:** Philosophy / Art-in-space / Language and history / Science fiction

Cost: \$45, a project of the Wichita Space Initiative

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## Solar System Ambassadors inform communities

When we put the 18 Kansas Solar System Ambassadors (SSA) in one of our facebook posts in December, it got a lot of interest. So, we want to spread the good word.

NASA's SSA program works with motivated volunteers to share the latest NASA science and discoveries to their communities. These dedicated ambassadors offer outreach programs free of charge for a variety of audiences. Programs take place in classrooms, libraries, museums, planetariums, online presentations, at community events and more all over Kansas.

To inquire about a having a SSA at your classroom or site, the directory link below has ambassadors' bios and contact info. *Photo credits: SSA website*

[Directory\\_ | Solar System Ambassadors – NASA Solar System Exploration](#)



**Paul  
Adams**  
Hays,  
Kansas



**Steven  
Arthur**  
Victoria,  
Kansas



**Jeanette  
Bosch**  
Manhattan,  
Kansas



**Mark  
Brown**  
Emporia,  
Kansas



**Mitchell  
Cloud**  
Shawnee,  
Kansas



**Brenda  
Culbertson**  
Mayetta,  
Kansas



**Jamie  
Davis**  
Olathe,  
Kansas



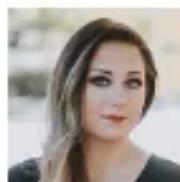
**April  
Eden**  
Longton,  
Kansas



**Hallie  
Hatfield**  
Wamego,  
Kansas



**Rick  
Heschmeyer**  
Lawrence,  
Kansas



**Danielle  
Jones**  
Overland Park,  
Kansas



**Pamela  
Kraus**  
Salina,  
Kansas



**Sarah  
Lamm**  
Colby,  
Kansas



**Danny  
Mattern**  
Andover,  
Kansas



**John  
Mulnix**  
Wichita,  
Kansas



**Jessica  
Sadler**  
Lawrence,  
Kansas



**Patrick Stacy**  
Fairway,  
Kansas



**Janice Toebben**  
Lawrence,  
Kansas



**WSU leads NSF rankings in engineering and aerospace research**

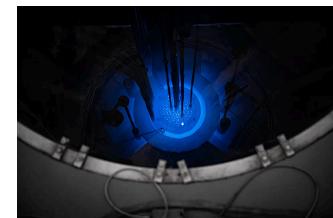
**WICHITA--**The National Science Foundation's (NSF) survey of 2024 R&D expenditures for U.S. universities continues to rank WSU at the top.

**WSU ranks No. 1 in aerospace engineering R&D from all funding sources, No.2 in engineering R&D funded by industry**



**Two KU teams earn awards from the AIAA competition**

**LAWRENCE--**Two KU engineering design teams earned awards from the prestigious American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA). Both teams finished second in the Graduate/ Open Missile Systems Design competition and in the Graduate Aircraft Design competition.



**TRIGA MARK II nuclear reactor enables K-State to offer nuclear engineering**

**MANHATTAN--**K-State has one of only 25 university-operated nuclear research reactors in the U.S. Nuclear engineering is being offered at K-State for the first time in 30 years, according to [SEEK](#), K-State's flagship research magazine.

The goal is to equip students with the skills and hands-on experience needed

and defense and No. 9 in engineering R&D from all funding sources. For a total of \$392 million in research expenditures.

[READ MORE](#)

*Photo credits:  
university websites*

These wins mark KU's 105th and 106th AIAA awards over the last 49 years, more than any other institution in the history of the AIAA.

[READ MORE](#)

to power America's future.

Nuclear research goes beyond energy. It includes medical imaging, therapies, agriculture, defense and manufacturing technologies.

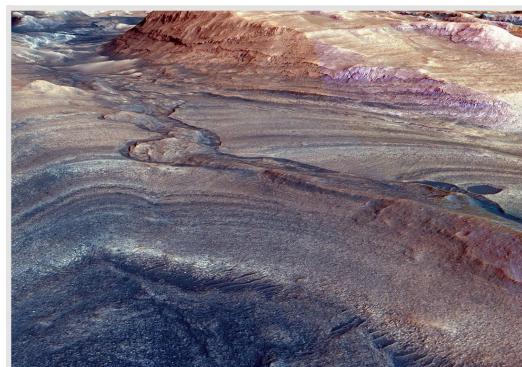
[READ MORE](#)



# 2026 NASA Calendar / Wallpaper download

The shots below of star cluster NGC 602 (about 200,000 light years from Earth) and variegated rock layers along Mars' Gale Crater are two of the images in NASA's 2026 Science Calendar. Free to download as a calendar or wallpaper, the images touch on asteroids, biology, aging and disease, weather, star formation and more and will explain the latest and give you extra links if you want to "go down the rabbit hole" and dig into these topics. Downloadable in English and Spanish and in high (92.45 MB) and low (14.25 MB) resolutions.

NASA 2026 Downloadable Calendar



### **Mission of the Ad Astra Kansas Foundation**

**Our mission is to advance the Kansas State Motto, "Ad Astra Per Aspera" (to the stars through difficulties), by promoting space science and education in Kansas.**

**Vision: We envision a Kansas known in the 21st century as the Ad Astra State and as a leader in space science research, development and education. Our goal is to: Interest Inform Inspire**

### **Ad Astra Kansas Foundation**

<https://www.adastrakansas.org>

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