

LGBTQ Pride Flag Planted on the 'Moon' As LGBTQ+ Representation in Space is Next Giant Leap

Out Astronaut completes its first test of a prototype EVA space suit in a gravity-offset laboratory and concludes with the planting of a Pride flag.

BOULDER, CO, UNITED STATES, April 25, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Out Astronaut](#), an organization addressing the under representation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) people in science and space, has completed the first test of a novel gravity-offset laboratory recently developed by the [International Institute for Astronautical Sciences](#) (IIAS) and established at Florida Tech in Melbourne, FL. As part of the test, which was conducted April 17, a Pride flag was planted into the simulated lunar regolith by a space suit evaluator working in an Extra-Vehicular Activity (EVA) space suit to provide visibility and inspiration to aspiring LGBTQ+ professionals in science and space.



Out Astronaut member Brandy Nunez concludes an evaluation of a novel EVA space suit in simulated lunar gravity by planting an LGBTQ+ Pride Flag in the lunar regolith simulant. The flag serves to provide visibility and representation to LGBTQ+ individuals

No professional astronaut has been selected who was an openly-identifying member of the LGBTQ+ community at the time of their selection. Out Astronaut believes – and research confirms – that the lack of such role models contributes to LGBTQ+ under-representation in STEM professions. More than 40 percent of LGBTQ people in STEM are not out, according to a recent poll conducted by Pride in STEM, and LGBTQ+ students are less likely to follow an academic career. Additionally and consequently, gaps exist in aeromedical knowledge that pertain to LGBTQ+ individuals.

“We believe that communities are empowered when they are represented,” said Out Astronaut Executive Director Jason Reimuller, Ph.D. “Astronauts inspire our youth, represent limitless possibilities and serve as STEM ambassadors, yet there has yet to be selected for professional

astronaut candidacy an openly-identifying LGBTQ+ individual.”

The gravity-offset laboratory at [Florida Tech’s Center for Aeronautics and Innovation](#) was built to evaluate space suit technologies in reduced gravity environments, including lunar gravity and zero-G. The test team consisted entirely of openly-identifying LGBTQ+ aerospace professionals: test director Dr. Jason Reimuller, test facility operator Mackenzie Calle and test subject Dr. Brandy Nunez, who planted the flag.

Throughout the following week, the lab will be used by students to evaluate a variety of tools designed for operation in space or on the lunar surface. The prototype space suit was provided to the IIAS by Final Frontier Design, a company acquired by Paragon Space Development Corporation in 2022 to further develop space suit technologies under the Axiom contract to NASA.

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Dr. Jason Reimuller



Space Suit Technician Chris Lundeen (left) , Gravity-Offset Facility Manager Dr Aaron Persad (center left), and Test Director Dr. Jason Reimuller (right) support Dr. Brandy Nunez (center right) as part of space suit research campaign led by Out Astronaut

In addition to highlighting the contributions of LGBTQ+ members currently working in science and space, Out Astronaut provides grants to individuals who openly embrace their role in the LGBTQ+ community, want to serve as role models to LGBTQ+ youth, and become representatives of their community in space-related fields. The next Out Astronaut Contest is now active and interested individuals may apply before 15 June at outastronaut.org.

About Out Astronaut

Out Astronaut is sponsored through the International Institute for Astronautical Sciences (IIAS) to address the under-representation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) people in science and space. Out Astronaut highlights the contributions of LGBTQ+ members currently working in science and space and provide grants to promising LGBTQ+ students currently pursuing professions in space-related fields. More information at outastronaut.org.

About the International Institute for Astronautical Sciences

Founded in 2015, the International Institute for Astronautical Sciences (IIAS) is a 501c3 nonprofit research and education organization with licensure from the State of Connecticut. With students from over 50 different countries, IIAS provides educational services and research opportunities in aeronomy, bioastronautics, microgravity science, space suit evaluation, operational science, and flight test engineering through partnerships with the National Research Council of Canada, Florida Tech, Survival Systems USA, NAUI, and the Canadian Space Agency.

Additionally, IIAS also sponsors three outreach programs designed to serve under-represented minorities in STEM: PoSSUM13, Out Astronaut, and Space for all Nations. More information at astronauticsinstitute.org.



Without external lighting, spatial orientation and fine motor skills become more challenging in a pressurized space suit.

About Florida Tech

The premier technological university in the Southeast, Florida Tech is a Tier 1 Best National University (U.S. News & World Report) and a Top Technical Institute (Fiske Guide to Colleges), as well as a Best Value University (Forbes) and a top 100 global university for graduate employability (GEURS). Florida Tech is known worldwide for its strengths in aerospace, advanced manufacturing, aviation, autism treatment, biomedical science, cybersecurity and machine-learning, and marine science. It offers more than 150 bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in engineering, science, computing, aeronautics, business, psychology and the liberal arts. The university is located in the dynamic and innovative city of Melbourne in the heart of the "Space Coast," where students have been watching rocket launches from campus since the dawn of the Space Race. Learn how Florida Tech is making history and shaping the future at floridatech.edu. Find stories about our relentless pursuit of greatness at floridatech.edu/news.

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