

Dr. Christopher Olsen is a 2013 graduate from the department of Physics and Astronomy. His thesis entitled 'Experimental Characterization of Plasma Detachment from Magnetic Nozzles' dealt with finding evidence of the physical mechanisms involved in the separation of accelerated plasma from its confining magnetic field and has applications in electric propulsion, plasma processing, fusion research, and understanding interactions in the solar chromosphere. This work was recently presented at the 33<sup>rd</sup> International Electric Propulsion Conference in Washington DC and was selected as the most outstanding paper of the session on Basic Processes. The paper is currently under review for a special edition of the IEEE Transactions of Plasma Science. Dr. Olsen has presented this work at plasma physics seminars located at the University of Texas - Austin and the University of Houston - Clear Lake. He performed his research under the tutelage of Dr. Paul Cloutier and Dr. Franklin Chang Diaz over the course of six years. Previous to Rice, Dr. Olsen received his Bachelors of Science degree from Brigham Young University in Provo Utah studying geology and physics.

Dr. Olsen current works as a senior research scientist for the Ad Astra Rocket Company whose focus is on the development of the VASIMR<sup>®</sup> plasma engine. Aside from helping advance this electric propulsion technology, he has also served to mentor students ranging from high school (Booker T. Washington HS) to graduate school (Stanford, Georgia Tech) through outreach programs and summer internships. Through his work at Ad Astra, Dr. Olsen has flown on nine 'Zero-G' research flights testing advanced cryocooler technology and heat transfer mechanisms in a microgravity environment. This work was sponsored by Ad Astra, SunPower Inc., and NASAs flight opportunities program which serves to fast track the development of space flight related hardware/technology.

He currently resides in League City Texas with his wife and three daughters and enjoys golf, surfing, and working on his 1981 corvette.