

A graduate of the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts in Natchitoches, Louisiana, Niescja Turner attended Rice University, where she majored in Physics with the Space Physics option. Her academic advisor was Dr. Pat Reiff and her research advisor was Dr. John Freeman, with whom she worked on magnetospheric physics research.

After Rice, she earned her M.S. and Ph.D. in Astrophysical, Planetary, and Atmospheric Sciences at the University of Colorado at Boulder. She then moved to Helsinki, Finland to work at the Finnish Meteorological Institute. Upon returning to the U.S., Dr. Turner joined the Physics faculty at the University of Texas at El Paso for a couple of years, then became Physics and Space Sciences faculty at the Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne, Florida for 9 years, where she continued her research into magnetic storms. She focused on energy coupling from the solar wind into the magnetosphere, as well as the role of corotating interaction regions in the solar wind and their efficiency compared to other disturbances like coronal mass ejections.

While a junior faculty member, she was awarded an NSF CAREER award for her work in space physics research and teaching.

While working in Florida, Turner and her colleague, astronaut Sam Durrance, co-led the Florida Governor's School for Space Science and Technology. This is a two-week, residential academy for academically gifted high school seniors focused on involving the students in research projects and providing appropriate curriculum to support the research projects. The academy is held at Kennedy Space Center in the summers and is now accompanied by an academic-year speaker program.

In 2012, she was the scientific and training lead for the nation's first-ever emergency preparedness exercise geared specifically to the aftermath of severe geomagnetic storms. Leaders from the Department of Energy, the Space Weather Prediction Center, Metatech Corporation, and the Florida Reliability Coordinating Council came to Melbourne, Florida for the workshop to help train over 500 emergency managers, law enforcement, and industry partners from all over Florida, in collaboration with Florida Division of Emergency Management and FEMA.

As of August of 2013, she is currently the Charles A. Zilker Professor of Physics and Astronomy, an endowed chair position at Trinity University, where she continues to focus on space research with students and her teaching.

Niescja lives in San Antonio with her husband and their daughter. They are expecting their second child later this month.