

NASA/HEAT Rice U Status Report – April 2021

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• *Reach for the Stars April 17*

Our major outreach program which we typically do annually (but was put on hold for 2020) is the “Reach for the Stars STEM Festival”

<https://space.rice.edu/ReachForTheStars/> event for middle school girls. This is a day which includes hands-on STEM exhibits, hands-on workshops on STEM topics, a keynote talk, and this year, jobs panel discussions. All workshops, keynotes and panels were led by women scientists, physicians or engineers.



In all, we had 249 registered participants: (185 middle school girls, 64 parents and teachers). Of these, 22 girls and 6 teachers were sponsored, and paid nothing. The rest paid a nominal \$10 towards lunch (and to reduce no-shows.). We had to reduce the number of participants this year so we could maintain social distancing. All staff, presenters, and volunteers were vaccinated.



Each workshop had learning goals so we could assess the success of the program.



Three of the tracks included heliophysics – the Space and Astronomy, the Earth Science and Environment, and the Physics, Chemistry and Engineering tracks. In addition, several of the exhibits featured heliophysics (including the 3D printed model of the magnetosphere).

We created a highlights movie of the event here: <https://youtu.be/fBMN74xO81k>

In all the students had a terrific time, the weather held out (the exhibit area wasn't rained out), and all students got a pair of eclipse glasses to save for the 2023/2024 Texas eclipses.

ISS Downlink from Space

We were invited to reach out to teachers to select local school children who would film questions for the ISS astronauts to answer from space. We have an extensive teacher network, so we were able to get 13 students to video themselves asking questions. These students plus students from Scotland and Ecuador had questions answered from space on April 8 by ISS astronauts Shannon Walker (a Rice University alumna) and Kate Rubens. The link with just the NASA downlink portion of the Q&A is here:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6AhAy6XprC4>

The full two-hour webcast included background messages from Scotland, Houston and Ecuador, and the remaining questions answered by astronaut Serena Auñon-Chancellor . It can be viewed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDrNqSBK6FA>



More information on the “Let’s Talk Space” program is here:

<https://www.connectcommunications.co.uk/2021/04/13/schools-in-space/>

The students (who ranged from kindergarten to high school) had great fun having their questions answered from space. Here are some quotes from the students:



“To have taken part in a privilege of that big a scale was something I'll never forget. It gave me the opportunity to see real people utilizing the things I was being taught in that very classroom, and to see those things in action really really opened my eyes to the possibility of my future.”

"It was so inspiring to be able to see a female astronaut from Houston."

"I can't believe she went to a high school I drive by everyday!"

"How can I get into Rice so I can be an astronaut too?"

Total student participants: (Ecuador, Scotland, and Houston): 30
Total number watching the webcast: 1030
Total number watched the NASA Youtube Replay: 94
Total number watched the “Let’s Talk Space” Youtube Replay: 154