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Saylor Foundation, NASA Collaborate to Offer New Free Space Systems Engineering Course

WASHINGTON, DC, **Date TBD** - Space Systems Engineering, a new massive open online course or MOOC from NASA and the Saylor Foundation, launches on Monday, March 3, 2014. The six-week general-audience course is available to the public at no cost and provides a unique opportunity to learn from and alongside NASA's engineers. Students who participate can earn a free certificate.

The Space Systems Engineering MOOC, the result of a months-long collaboration between the non-profit Saylor Foundation, Washington, D.C. and personnel from NASA, examines basic systems engineering and teamwork as well as project life cycle, scoping, requirements, and trade studies. Foundation staff contributed technical, audio-video, and instructional design support, while course content consists of existing and augmented NASA materials.

Video lectures from personnel supporting the James Webb Space Telescope and the Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite missions at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Md., form the backbone of the lessons. NASA project manager Jeff Volosin, NASA mission systems engineer Mike Menzel, and Nobel Laureate Dr. John C. Mather will provide the lectures.

"This is a good way to understand the big picture of what system engineers do; you have to understand how you fit into the team," said Jeff Volosin, project manager for the Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite mission, one of the main instructors during the course. "Whether you are going to be a systems engineer or work with them you have some background because every engineer has to work in an area where systems engineering is a part of their life."

In producing this course, the Saylor Foundation stepped outside of its usual format to seize an opportunity deemed too good to pass up. David Rose, the foundation's content analyst and project lead for the course, said, "Being able to partner with such a storied agency like NASA is truly exciting for us. Our shared goal of enabling the public to access useful, compelling information makes us natural collaborators. As with our other

courses on Saylor.org, we have repurposed exceptional resources freely available on the web, but this time we have the support and guidance of the people behind those resources.”

That’s a distinction that pays real dividends to students, Rose says. “It has been extremely rewarding working with brilliant minds at NASA, and I encourage anyone – everyone – to take advantage of the opportunity to learn from them.”

Students can enroll prior to March at the [course registration page](#) and may also join the course at any point thereafter. Each week, registered students will receive an email detailing their assignments, questions for discussion, and opportunities to interact with one another and course designers, including NASA staff, through discussion forums.

Live Google+ Hangouts present a unique chance to engage with those behind the course; the first of several will be held on Friday, March. 7 with Jeff Volosin. Students who successfully complete the course (by passing a final exam) will receive a free certificate of completion. There will also be an optional project, and the winners of the project competition will be awarded a tour of NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Md. as well as a Google+ Hangout with the instructors of the course.

The many contributing materials to this course are all in the public domain and will remain on the Saylor Foundation's website indefinitely. Regardless of when they join the course, registered students will be able to revisit the materials whenever they wish and can incorporate the resources into other learning objects. In this respect, the Saylor Foundation's take on space systems engineering serves a continuing role as open courseware built entirely of open educational resources. The content for this MOOC was derived from a more extensive course developed by NASA engineer Lisa Guerra, during her tenure at The University of Texas at Austin. The original space systems engineering course is intended for undergraduate engineers as a supplement to their capstone design work.

Related Links

Enrollment: <http://www.saylor.org/sse-enrollment-page/>

NASA scientist interviews: <http://www.saylor.org/scienceminded/>

About the Saylor Foundation

The Saylor Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization based in Washington, D.C. As part of our mission to make quality education freely available to all, we employ experienced faculty to design K-12, university, and career level courses from the wealth of material available on the Web. Today, the Foundation’s free education initiative at Saylor.org provides over 300 standard and college credit-aligned courses to anyone with an Internet connection.

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