School of Earth and Space Exploration
Arizona State University

April 2021

Dear Friends,

In this month's newsletter, we are celebrating the ASU Class of 2021! We are so proud of our graduates and excited about all that they will achieve as they begin this new chapter in their lives.

Congratulations to our School of Earth and Space Exploration **Dean's Medalist, Junehyoung Jeon** and all our 2021 graduates who have persevered!

I am also excited to share news of one of our geological sciences alums, **Sian Proctor**, who was recently selected as a member of the first ever all-commercial crew to fly into space (planned for late 2021). Sian is just one example of the many successful graduates who are achieving new heights and we wish her the best on this incredible journey.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter featuring our graduating student highlights, research news, announcements, and events. For more information we have included links to social media at the end of this newsletter.

And please take a moment to visit our school's **graduation webpage** for student stories, congratulatory videos and messages, and information on celebrating graduation and convocation.

Be well and keep safe, and to our graduates and their families: Congratulations and Go Devils!

Meenakshi (Mini) Wadhwa

In the News

Mars 2020 Mastcam-Z team captures Ingenuity's first flight

On April 19, the Mars Helicopter, Ingenuity, took its first flight on the Red Planet. It climbed to about 10 feet above the ground, hovered in the air briefly, completed a turn, and then landed. This major milestone, the very first powered flight on Mars (and the first of such flight in any world beyond Earth) was captured by the ASU-led Mastcam-Z team, with PI Jim Bell, in the early hours of that Monday morning and shared with the world. The team photo featured here was taken in ISTB4 just moments after the news of the successful flight was broadcast. **Read more about the Mastcam-Z team and the Mars 2020 mission**

THEMIS team celebrates 20 years of mapping Mars with NASA's Odyssey orbiter

Observing its 20th anniversary, NASA's 2001 Mars Odyssey orbiter, the longest-lived spacecraft at the Red Planet, has helped locate water ice, find landing sites and study the planet's mysterious moons. On board this spacecraft is the ASU-led Thermal Emission Imaging System (THEMIS) led by Phil Christensen. Two decades of data have led to complete global maps of Mars, amazing scientific discoveries, JMARS, and a basketball-court sized map of Mars that has been featured in schools and on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. **Read more**

Humongous flare from sun's nearest neighbor breaks records

A team of scientists, including ASU's Evgenya Shkolnik and Parke Loyd, has spotted the largest flare ever recorded from the sun's nearest stellar neighbor in ultraviolet light, the star Proxima Centauri, host to our nearest exoplanet neighbor. Their research, which was recently published in The Astrophysical Journal Letters, could help to shape the hunt for life beyond Earth's solar system. **Read more**

Understanding Earth's critical zone

In celebration of Earth Day earlier this month, Arjun Heimsath discussed the study of sustainability and how the environment has changed over the years; as well as about his course, "Earth's Critical Zone" in a recent feature in ASU News. Heimsath believes that understanding the physical and chemical processes that operate in this zone, as well as the way that geology, climate and humans impact how these processes take place, is a critical step in addressing many of the challenges our planet faces. **Read more**

Mars Madness tournament imagines life on the red planet

This spring, the Interplanetary Initiative held a tournament where ASU undergraduate students became citizens of an early Martian community charged with working together to survive, and thrive, far from home. "Mars Madness," involved an online game called Port of Mars where players are assigned characters and use a dashboard to make decisions, monitor changes and chat with other players. **Read more**

Announcements

Dean's Medalist observes the early universe with fearless enthusiasm

Congratulations to Junehyoung Jeon the School of Earth and Space Exploration Dean's Medalist for 2021, having earned this award through his excellent academic performance, his collaborative spirit doing research and his fearless enthusiasm toward solving new problems. **Read more**

Elkins-Tanton among new class of National Academy of Sciences members

Lindy Elkins-Tanton, professor and planetary scientist, has been elected to the National Academy of Sciences. She joins 120 newly elected national and international members – 59 of whom are women, the most elected in a single year. Elkins-Tanton, who is also Vice President of ASU's Interplanetary Initiative and Principal Investigator of the NASA Psyche mission, was selected for her distinguished and continuing achievements in original research. **Read more**

ASU professor named NASA's Mars Sample Return program scientist

School Director, Mini Wadhwa, has been appointed as the Mars Sample Return program scientist and will be responsible for the scientific integrity and the overall scientific success of the program. The program (planned jointly by NASA and ESA), will return samples collected by the Perseverance rover from the surface of Mars to Earth by way of a Sample Retrieval Lander and an Earth Return Orbiter, with an anticipated 2026–2028 launch timeframe. **Read more**

'Mission: Interplanetary' podcast hosts talk about the future of space exploration

We are in a revolutionary era of space exploration, and humans are becoming an interplanetary species. A new podcast from the Interplanetary Initiative and Slate, "Mission: Interplanetary," looks at those big questions and ponders the glimpses into the future that lie beyond the bounds of Earth. Global Explorer in Residence, Cady Coleman, hosts "Mission: Interplanetary" with Andrew Maynard, ASU's Associate Dean of Curricula and Student Success in the College of Global Futures. **Read more**

Events

Virtual Night Sky

Join the ASU Marston Exploration Theater presenters on **Wednesday May 5 and 19, 2021 at 7 p.m.** for a live planetarium presentation. Learn about the planets and stars visible in the night sky from your own backyard and the latest events in space exploration! Register in advance for these FREE Zoom webinars **May 5** and **May 19.**

End-of-Year 2021 NASA Psyche inspired showcase

Psyche Inspired is a program that brings undergraduate students from any discipline or major together to share the excitement, innovation and scientific and engineering content of NASA's Psyche mission with the public in new ways through artistic and creative works. Join us as we celebrate the 15 immensely talented student artists of the Psyche Inspired 2020-2021 Nickel Class! The Online Showcase will be open May 10–24. **Register in advance and get more details**.

Alumni Announcements

ASU geological sciences alum selected for space crew

Sian Proctor, an instructor at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at ASU and a School of Earth and Space Exploration alum, is among four passengers set to go into orbit this fall on a private flight on SpaceX's Inspiration4 mission. **Read more**

Alumni: Keep it current!

Join us on **LinkedIn** and **update your contact info** so you can receive the latest School and university news, exclusive career and professional development opportunities, unique ASU experiences, invitations to special events and much more!

ASU School of Earth and Space Exploration
Arizona State University

#1 in the U.S. for innovation
ASU ahead of MIT and Stanford
– U.S. News & World Report: 6 years, 2016–2021