

Astronaut Jim Voss Joins CU-Boulder Aerospace Faculty

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Jim Voss on a spacewalk. Courtesy of NASA.

University of Colorado alumnus-astronaut Jim Voss has become the second astronaut to join CU-Boulder's aerospace engineering sciences department following his NASA career, which for Voss included five spaceflights, 202 days in space and four spacewalks.

Voss is one of three astronauts affiliated as faculty at CU-Boulder. He joins former astronaut Joe Tanner, who joined the aerospace engineering sciences department as a senior instructor in fall 2008. Their NASA colleague John Grunsfeld, who remains active at NASA, accepted a future appointment as adjoint professor in the astrophysical and planetary sciences department through an email from space last spring.

"I have returned to CU to teach and to help the College of Engineering and Applied Science and the aerospace department," said Voss, who earned his master's degree in aerospace engineering at CU-Boulder in 1974 and was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Colorado in 2000. "I hope to help inspire the next generation of space explorers."

Voss was hired as a full-time scholar in residence and holds the Roubos Endowed Chair in Engineering, supported by a gift from CU-Boulder alumni Gary and Terie Roubos. He also will serve as an ambassador for the college and campus.

"Jim Voss brings a wealth of hands-on experience that will benefit both the educational and research missions of our university," said Robert Davis, dean of the College of Engineering and Applied Science. "It is a privilege to have Jim on our faculty."

Voss was a U.S. Army flight test engineer before he went to work at NASA's Johnson Space Center in 1984. He was selected as an astronaut candidate in 1987, after which he trained for Space Shuttle flights, then trained in Russia as a back-up crew member to the Russian space station Mir. His first spaceflight came in 1991, and he flew again in 1992, 1995, 2000, and 2001. During 2001, he lived on board the International Space Station for 163 days as a member of the Expedition2 crew.

Since his retirement from NASA as a U.S. Army Colonel in 2003, he has held positions as professor and associate dean of engineering at Auburn University, where he earned his bachelor's degree in 1972; vice president for space exploration systems at Transformational Space Corp.; vice president of engineering for SpaceDev in Louisville, and director of advanced programs at Sierra Nevada Corp, which acquired SpaceDev in 2008.

Voss said his assignment includes teaching classes and mentoring graduate student projects in the area of human space flight and helping to develop the department's graduate program in bioastronautics, along with Tanner, associate professor David Klaus and research professor Louis Stodieck.

"There are very few universities that have a focus area involving bioastronautics and human space flight, so CU is rather unique in this," Voss said. "We hope to make it even stronger through further development of the research component."

Voss will develop and teach a new undergraduate course, "Introduction to Human Space Flight," which will be similar to what he taught during the 2004 and 2005 summer sessions and may be open to engineers and non-engineers alike.

Next year, he also will take over the department's "Introduction to Aerospace Engineering" course, which helps first-year engineering students to better understand the engineering profession. "I volunteered to teach it because I thought it would be a good way to motivate students to continue to pursue engineering as a career," said Voss, whose wide range of work experiences, including military, NASA and industry engineering positions, make him a good fit for the course.

Voss said his desire to teach was born some 30 years ago when he taught for three years at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. "When I left, I said I wanted to eventually come back and teach again. I told that to an interviewer while I was on the Space Station (in 2001) and to my surprise, the next day I was contacted by both Auburn and CU."

"This position combines my interest in teaching with the specialty in human space flight, which I have made my career. I look forward to helping the college achieve its vision for excellence by assisting with industry and alumni relations while sharing my experiences with students to prepare them to meet the engineering challenges in our global society."

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