







Summer fall 2021

Summer Fall 2021 Recognition of Graduates

December 3, 2021







25th Anniversary PRC Alumni. The photo above is of PRC Alumni, faculty, and special friends of the UAH Propulsion Research Center at our 25th Anniversary Celebration in 2016. Pictured above are Amit Patel, Sara Shedon, Tony Hall, Dr. David Flanigan, Pete Markopoulos, Dr. Holly Britten, Dr. Bill Emrich, TBD, Brian Roy, Dr. Zhong Ren, Dr. Noah Rhys, Dr. John Bennewitz, Dr. Kent Chojnacki, Dr. David Lineberry, Dr. John Belvins, Dr. Hugh Coleman, Dr. Matthew Hitt, Dr. Dan Jones, Dr. Gerald Russell, Dr. Kevin Higdon, and Dr. Robert Frederick. This year we will have on campus celebrations April 14 and 15, 2022 to mark our 30th Anniversary.

This fall we celebrate our students achieving three PhDs, five master's degrees, and six bachelor's degrees supported by research at the UAH Propulsion Research Center during the summer or fall of 2021. We also recognize the promotion of two of our staff members and UAH's Alumni of Distinction honors being given to two of our PRC alumni.

New graduates, as you continue your studies or enter the new workforce, take pride in all the people who have made UAH and the PRC an outstanding place for you to build relationships, gain an exceptional education, and participate in cutting-edge research projects.

Remember to "Keep our relationships more important than tasks or problems." We wish all the graduates a successful and enjoyable future. Call on us in the future. We look forward to hearing from you.

> Dr. Robert A. Frederick, Jr. PRC Director Professor of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering December 3, 2021









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Summer Fall 2021 PRC Graduate Recognition Program

Welcome

Dr. Robert Frederick, PRC Director

Dr. John Christy, Interim Vice President for Research and Economic Development

Dr. Keith Hollingsworth, Chair, Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering

Recognition of Alumni and Staff

PRC Staff Promotions

UAH Alumni of Achievement

Recognition of Graduates

Ph.D. Students

Master's Students

Undergraduate Students

Virtual Reception

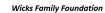
Introduction of Special Friends and Family Members











Recognition of PRC Staff Promotion



Mr. Tony Hall **Research Engineer BSME, UAH 2003** Started at the PRC in 2003



Dr. David Lineberry Principal Research Engineer Associate Director of Johnson Research Center PhD, UAH 2007 Started at the PRC in 2008

Recognition of UAH Alumni of Distinction



Dr. Shery Welsh, Alumni of Achievement PH.D. MATERIALS SCIENCE '14

Director, Air Force Office of Scientific Research (AFOSR)

ALABA Mr. Destin Sandlin, Outstanding Young Alumni of

Achievement

MS MECHANICAL ENGINEERING '11, PROPULSION RESEARCH CENTER GRADUATE

UAH MS with Dr. Robert Frederick Evans in 2011

Alumni of Achievement Award

UAH PhD with Dr. Jeff Evans in 2014

The Alumni of Achievement Award is the highest honor bestowed by the UAH Alumni Association. The award recognizes graduates who have distinguished themselves professionally and personally and who exemplify the high standards of UAH.

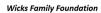
Outstanding Young Alumni of Achievement Award

The Outstanding Young Alumni of Achievement Award is one of the highest honors bestowed by the UAH Alumni Association.









Recognition of Doctoral Graduates



Dr. Dennis Nikitaev Las Vegas, NV

Dennis Nikitaev is receiving a Master of Science and a Doctor of Philosophy degree and in Aerospace Systems Engineering. Dennis completed his dissertation on "Implications of Alternative In-Situ Propellants Used in Nuclear Thermal Propulsion Engines", with his advisor Dr. Dale Thomas. He explained, "this work looked at using water and ammonia obtained from the surface of the Moon as propellant for Nuclear Thermal Propulsion engines and examined the vehicle performance and Lunar infrastructure requirements. The results showed that it could be advantageous to use ammonia on a separate vehicle to supplement other vehicles that use higher performance propellants." Dennis added, "UAH was my first choice for graduate school which led me to visit UAH in August 2018 and get acquainted with the PRC and my advisor." "I appreciate Dr. Thomas for providing me the opportunity to work on alternative propellants for nuclear thermal propulsion engines at UAH. He provided guidance, mentoring, and relayed his wisdom so that I can become a better researcher."

Dr. Dale Thomas said, "When Dennis showed up at UAH, he possessed an energy and enthusiasm that I attributed to his first weeks at a new school, and just excited to be here. That was three years ago, and I'm still waiting for that energy and excitement to ebb. His energy, his willingness to learn, and his teamwork ethos made him a true asset for my research team. His research on the use of in-situ propellants is foundational and will inform future NASA mission architecture studies in this area."

Dennis accepted a job offer at Analytical Mechanics Associates where he will continue his work on modeling nuclear thermal propulsion engines.



Dr. Mitchell Rodriguez Rapid City, SD

Mitchell Rodriguez is receiving a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Mechanical Engineering. He completed his dissertation, "Multiphysics Smoothed Particle Hydrodynamics Modeling of the Ablation of Electrodes in Space-based, Z-Pinch Nuclear Fusion Propulsion Engines", with his advisor, Dr. Jason Cassibry. Mitchell explained, "I modeled electrode components that would be used in Z-pinch pulse fusion propulsion engines for space travel, and examined how different electrode materials and pulse configurations would affect electrode ablation rates. I then used the electrode models to calculate the mass needed for electrode components in notional fusion propulsion spacecraft, on a variety of example space missions. The results showed that shortening the fusion pulse in the reactor would best reduce the rates of electrode ablation, and keep the space vehicle from getting too heavy with added electrode mass to compensate." Mitchell added, "I was interested in UAH's opportunities to explore

spacecraft propulsion, notably advanced propulsion systems, which led me to pursue my degree there. I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Cassibry, as well as my

committee members - Dr. Frederick, Dr. Xu, Dr. Lineberry and Dr. Seidler - for their

guidance, support and expertise, which have helped me improve my skills as an

Dr. Jason Cassibry remarked that "Mitchell was not just a great student, he has been a great friend. We collaborated to come up with a robust scheme to evaluate 2nd order derivatives for a computational method and then he applied it to craft a wonderful dissertation. But most of our meetings devolved into discussions of Star Trek. As they say in the Klingon Empire, Qapla!"

Mitchell is working full-time with the Jacobs Space Exploration Group in Huntsville, supporting the Advanced Concepts Office at NASA Marshall Space Flight Center.

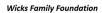
engineer and a researcher."

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Dr. Madhu Sridhar Bangalore, India

Madhu Sridhar is receiving a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Mechanical Engineering. Madhu completed his dissertation on "The Effects of Altitude on the Aerodynamic Performance of Monarch Butterflies". He explained, "the objective of my research was to test the hypothesis that aerodynamic performance of Monarch butterflies improves at reduced density conditions at higher altitudes. I experimentally measured and documented the wing and body motions of free flight of Monarchs at various density conditions inside the PRC's vacuum chamber. Furthermore, I used a well validated, fully coupled Navier-Stokes and structural dynamics solver to illustrate the interplay between the wing motion, aerodynamics, and structural flexibility in forward flight at low density conditions for enhanced aerodynamic performance." Madhu added, "I performed the experimental part of my dissertation in the PRC vacuum chamber. I'm extremely thankful to Dr. Frederick, Mr. Tony Hall, and Dr. Lineberry for their support and assistance during my experimental studies at PRC."

Dr. Chang-kwon Kang said, "PhD dissertation involved both experimental and CFD studies of the flights of Monarch butterflies, resulting in new hypotheses and interesting novel observations. Madhu was not only a great student but also an excellent teacher, mentor, and friend to many of us at UAH. He will have a bright career and we will definitely miss him!"

Madhu plans to join the industry as an applied CFD researcher.

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Wicks Family Foundation



Recognition of Master's Degree Graduates



Takuto Iriyama Chiba, Japan

Takuto Iriyama is receiving a Masters of Science degree in Aerospace Systems Engineering. He completed his thesis on the "Effects of Non-uniform Internal Temperature Distribution on The Degradation of Liquid-Cooled Parallel-Connected Lithium-ion Cells", with his advisor Dr. Guangsheng Zhang. Takuto explained, "my research was about degradation of lithium-ion batteries with temperature gradient, especially on liquid-cooling systems." He continued, "I've worked with Dr. Frederick this semester. UAH offers a challenging and valuable experience for all students who want to study. The experts in my area of research interest have helped me a lot during my studies."

Dr. Guangsheng Zhang stated, "Takuto works hard and takes his responsibilities carefully. As indicated in our publications and his thesis, Takuto has grown from a project supporter to an insightful, creative and resilient project leader over the past three years, initially as an undergraduate assistant and then as a graduate assistant. I am sure he will do well in his future career."

Dr. Robert Frederick remarked that Takuta has been an excellent grader for his Rocket Propulsion class this semester, and he wishes him great success in his future

Takuta is planning to go back to Japan and work in satellite development.



Timothy Morris Tuscon, AZ

Timothy Morris is completing a Master's degree in Aerospace Systems Engineering. He completed his thesis titled "Experimental Measurements of the Wing Deformation and Force Production of Real Monarch Butterfly Wings" with his advisor Dr. Chang-kwon Kang. Timothy explained, "the purpose of this study was to determine the aeroelastic properties of a monarch butterfly wing near monarch free flight flapping amplitudes." He added, "I was offered a position by Dr. Kang after taking his class. In general and with regards to Dr. Kang, everyone is kind and encouraging. The research done at the PRC is both fascinating and beneficial to humanity."

Dr. Kang said, "Tim is a great engineer who is very thorough and creative. He did a nice job setting up the motion and force measurements of Monarch butterfly wings. He will have a bright future in his career."

Timothy is planning to work in the field of robotics.



Mitchell Schroll

Mitchell Schroll is receiving a Master of Science Degree in Aerospace Systems Engineering. He completed his non-thesis degree with his advisor Dr. Brian Landrum. Mitchell explained, "I served as a Graduate Teaching Assistant for the SLI senior design class. Currently working as a research assistant on experimental studies for Centrifugal Nuclear Thermal Propulsion fluid and heat dynamics." Mitchell added, "I met with Dr. Frederick about possibilities of assisting with his research and ended up helping with the SLI team. I appreciate the welcoming and helpful staff and fellow students that work at the PRC. They are always willing to help troubleshoot problems or figure out the next steps on a project."

Dr. David Lineberry remarked, "Mitchell played a key role in helping the USLI team achieve successes during a COVID-callenged spring semester. As a TA, he was an outstanding advisor and mentor to the students, and helped them in the documentation, design assessments, builds...and rebuilds of their rockets. I really appreciate his willingness to lend a hand, his initiative to take on tasks, and his











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Cleveland, TN

patience in working with the student team. I look forward to working with Mitchell as he pursues his Ph.D."

Dr. Robert Frederick remarked that "Mitchell was an outstanding student in Rocket Propulsion I and II. He is off to a great start on his PhD having already co-authored a conference paper and received an award for best poster presentation at an international conference."

Dr. Brian Landrum remarked that "I first met Mitchell in spring 2020 when he began his MS program in Aerospace Systems Engineering. In spring 2021, he served as a Teaching Assistant for my sophomore introductory aerospace engineering course. Mitchell was conscientious and excellently performed the various grading and administrative tasks I assigned. I continued as his academic advisor through completion of his non-thesis degree in summer 2021. Mitchell was admitted to the UAH PhD program in Aerospace Systems this fall. Through his academic performance and research activities to date, Mitchell has clearly demonstrated academic excellence and potential for great success in a research environment."

Mitchell is continuing his education pursuing a Ph.D. at UAH with a dissertation on Modeling of CNTP engines.



Emily Wood Franklin, TN

Emily "Emmy" Wood is completing a Master's Degree in Aerospace Systems Engineering. She completed her thesis titled "Evaluation of Minimally-Intrusive Power Generation Alternatives for a Nuclear Thermal Propulsion Engine" with her advisor Dr. Dale Thomas. Emmy stated, "my work focuses on ways to use the nuclear reactor onboard the Mars Transfer Vehicle to provide power to the vehicle with no changes to the reactor core and only minimal changes to the engine design." She explained, "I applied to be a GRA and about 2 months later Dr. Thomas sent me an email offering me an assistantship working on Nuclear Thermal Propulsion in the Complex Systems Integration Lab. I will greatly miss all of my friends in the CSIL, although I know we will keep in touch."

Dr. Dale Thomas stated, "Nobody will ever mistake Emily for a shy person, but she was what I would call technically shy when she showed up here at UAH in the Fall of 2019. It was really fun to watch her grow in confidence as she tackled the research project assigned to her -- how to best generate electricity from a Nuclear Thermal Rocket engine designed solely for propulsion. In so doing she had to tackle a variety of subjects outside her comfort zone, and tackle them she did. She is missed in the CSIL because she was a great teammate, although frankly none of us miss her occasional renditions of the Ole Miss alma mater. Hotty toddy, Emily!!"

Emmy will be working as a Systems Engineer at Aerojet Rocketdyne here in Huntsville.











James Venters *Huntsville*, *AL*

James Venters is receiving his Master of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering. He completed a non-thesis degree with his advisors Dr. Farbod Fahimi and Dr. David Lineberry. James stated, "during my time at the PRC, I have assisted with: cold flow injector characterization, testing of solid, liquid, and hybrid rocket engines, fluid system design and fabrication, and instrumentation set up. I assist on our contracted research work in the cold flow spray facility and on the hot fire test stand. I generally assist on whatever the most pressing issue is at any given time. James continued, "Dr. Dan Jones introduced me to the PRC. I initially applied to work as an intern for Earth to Sky I but then transitioned to working at the JRC. I am grateful for Dr. David Lineberry, Mr. Tony Hall, Dr. Dan Jones, Mr. Evan Unruh, and Mr. Joseph Agnew for all the help they have given me over the years and guiding me to being a better engineer."

Dr. Lineberry remarked, "James has developed into an outstanding rocket test engineer. His technical knowledge, hard-work, and intuition, have helped the PRC conduct successful test campaigns for numerous customers over the past few years. We have come to rely on James heavily as the key engineer for many of the test campaigns and test facility upgrade work during his stay as a graduate student."

James is pursuing a career in the propulsion industry, preferably in liquid rocket engine testing.

Recognition of Bachelor's Degree Graduates



Jacqueline Crews *Atlanta, GA*

Jacqueline Crews is graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing. She said, "I learned a lot of quality lessons through my time here. I've always struggled with grasping how long tasks would take. This job and nursing school greatly improved that. Y'all had a lot of grace and taught me good life lessons. I appreciate the relationships that I have built with Dr. Frederick, Mrs. Cromartie and Mr. Edmondson."

Mrs. Gabriele Cromartie said, "Jackie played a very important role in the PRC office. She came to us with event planning experience, showed a high level of commitment and learned quickly. Her friendly demeanor and helpfulness was appreciated by students and faculty alike. With her nursing background we could often get some 'insider tips' on the COVID pandemic. Jackie is experienced, smart and my 'Jac(queline) of all trades." We will miss you greatly!

Dr. Robert Frederick said, "Jackie provided the PRC front office with a great deal of positive energy and an 'can do' attitude. Her professional expertise in nursing was a tremendous help to me as our team made plans to transition back to campus in the middle of a COVID pandemic. We know she will be a great nurse as she has taken such good care of all of us."

Jacqueline will pursue her dream of working as a nurse (hopefully) in the Huntsville Hospital System.

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Bailey Gregory Raleigh, NC

Bailey Gregory is graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in Aerospace Engineering. Bailey stated, "I worked as a research assistant for the Charger Atomic Propulsion and Power Lab. I emailed Dr. Cassibry summer 2019 before my junior year after a friend had reminded me of his research. The lab has always been a great environment and has greatly improved my college experience."

Dr. Jason Cassibry, her mentor, added, she joined our lab several years ago. She worked extremely well with the rest of the team, and was selected for a Research and Creative Experience for Undergraduates (RCEU). In that program she tested an electrostatic meter that she designed and made herself. She has been a great citizen of the lab. We wish her the best as she transitions into the professional world!

Bailey will work at Northrop Grumman on missile defense as a systems engineer.



Dara Mulford Belleville, IL

Dara Mulford is receiving a Bachelor of Science degree in Aerospace Engineering. She explained, "I assisted in the development, testing, and maintenance of fusion propulsion technologies (aka Sparky). Maintained rail gap switches for triggering the fusion explosions. Designed schematics for and built voltage multipliers to amplify the voltage for triggering the explosion. I had Jason Cassibry for my Airbreathing Propulsion class, and I bonded with him over the semester since he and my dad went to college together at Rolla. Dara stated, I appreciate Dr. Sumontro and all of my coworkers because they really did make me feel like I was part of the family. Everyone was very intelligent and passionate about what we did which made me love coming into work. It was the most fun I had at a job and I would do it again if I could.

Dr. Jason Cassibry, her mentor, remarked that, "Dara is planning to continue to work for UAH at the Rotorcraft Systems and Simulation Center until she finds a full time engineering position in the Huntsville area. She was originally an outstanding student in my air breathing propulsion class. Dara stepped up and joined our lab, and stood out for working well with any and everybody. She was an absolute joy to work with!"

Dara will pursue a career in aerospace engineering in the Huntsville area.



Diana Nikitaeva Las Vegas, NV

Diana Nikitaeva is receiving her Bachelor of Science degree in Aerospace Engineering. She stated, "I am currently researching nuclear power systems for outer space exploration and propellant production on the Moon. Previously, I assisted with modeling and simulation of NASA's Nuclear Thermal Propulsion vehicle and worked with a graduate student to interface different NTP vehicle components." Diana explained, I found out that Dr. Thomas does Nuclear Thermal Propulsion work, and I decided to join and contribute to that project. I really appreciate the overall atmosphere and the friendly and caring people at PRC."

Dr. Dale Thomas remarked, "Diana has contributed to the CSIL research team in a variety of roles over the last couple of years as an undergraduate research assistant. She diligently performed her assigned tasks -- even the ones that she did not particularly enjoy. One task that I think she did enjoy was helping our research team to develop the Spacecraft Integrated Systems Model, and she was the lead author on two conference papers which she presented at AIAA conferences -- quite remarkable for an undergraduate. I am looking forward to having her join the research team as a GRA for the spring semester."

Diana's future plans include continuing her education and pursuing a Master's of Science degree in Aerospace Systems Engineering and researching nuclear power production on the Moon.















Chandler Larson Tullahoma, TN

Chandler Larson is receiving his Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering. He explained, "I worked on the supersonic wind tunnel experiments and executed testing procedures for researching heat transfer for film cooling." Chandler remembered, "I became involved with the PRC when I was a sophomore by emailing Dr. Ligrani asking him if I could assist in his research. I really appreciated how the PRC felt like a family. I enjoyed being surrounded by intelligent people who were all excited about their work, and working at the PRC made a large impact on the field I chose to go into once I graduated."

His mentor Dr. Phillip Ligrani stated, "Chandler supported efforts on a project related to impingement and effusion cooling, as employed within a double wall cooling arrangement. The results of this research effort are applicable to combustor liners of gas turbine engines, which are utilized both for aero-propulsion and for utility power generation. According to Dr. Phillip Ligrani, "Chandler did an excellent job related to measurement devices and apparatus for the experimental facility, including flow qualification and heat transfer measurement checks and verifications." Because of these efforts, Chandler is co-author on a paper published in the ASME Transactions-Journal of Turbomachinery, which is titled, "Louver Slot Cooling and Full-Coverage Film Cooling With a Combination Internal Coolant Supply." He has also been involved with recent research efforts for surface heat transfer characteristics along a transonic turbine blade tip with different film cooling hole arrangements, a squealer rim, and a squealer recess. This project is especially challenging because it involves advanced transient surface heat transfer measurements in a transonic flow environment. The results of Chandler's exemplary research work are especially important as they provide new insight into the physical effects related surface heat transfer characteristics from transonic blade tip film cooling."

Chandler will be working at AEDC as a wind tunnel test engineer.



Madison Snell Folsom, CA

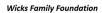
Madison Snell is receiving her Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering. Madison has been involved with measurements and analysis of complex fluids using an advanced, state-of-the-art Anton Parr rheometer. Her efforts have led to new understanding of the rheological properties of viscoelastic fluids, especially because of her successes in adjusting and calibrating the rheometer, and then employing the device for fluid analysis. She has also done an excellent job in mentoring other students who have been working in the same laboratory. According to **Dr. Phillip Ligrani**, "Because of her excellent efforts in the laboratory, the results which Madison produced are expected to lead to an important paper, which will be submitted for archival journal publication." Madison plans to pursue an engineering career in the Huntsville area.











Spring 2021 Graduates - Looking Back

Ph.D.s



Dr. Joseph Robert Kennedy Buckley La Crosse, WI



Dr. Joseph Indeck St. Louis, MO



Dr. Althea Wilson

Master's



Prathmesh Anantwar Pune, India



William Hankins Lexington, AL



Margarita Hockensmith Lexington, KY



Erik Korzon



Evan Unruh Eagle Creek, OR



The Viall Family from Left to Right: Wesley, Strider, Mary Kate.

Bachelor's



Melissa Costa Decatur, AL



Matthew Cox



Kyle Goethals



Benjamin Knox Trussville, AL



John McDonough Tuscaloosa, AL



Christopher Smith Charlotte, NC



Nathan Ulmer

Spring 2021 Graduates

Dr. Joseph Buckley
Propulsion/Responsible
Engineer
BE-4 Thrust Chamber
Assembly (TCA)
Blue Origin
Huntsville, AL

William Hankins Systems Engineer Lockheed Martin Huntsville, AL

Evan Unruh Design Engineer, Aerojet Rocketdyne Huntsville, AL

Wesley Viall
Aerospace Engineer
DEVCOM Aviation and
Missile Center

Melissa Costa Test Engineer Jacobs ESSCA/MSFC Huntsville, AL







Declan Brick named Goldwater Scholar

Excerpts from an article by Jim Steele (full article by J. Steele at https://www.uah.edu/prc)



Declan Brick, Undergraduate Research Assistant

Declan Brick, an aerospace engineering and physics double-major at The University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH), a part of The University of Alabama System, has been named a Goldwater Scholar, the first from UAH in 13 years.

Brick is an undergraduate research assistant at the UAH Plasma and Electrodynamics Research Laboratory and is mentored by Dr. Gabriel Xu, an associate professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering.

"The honors student says the application process helped point him toward what he wants to do in his Ph.D. research. 'It's been both rewarding and also part of the process,' Brick explains. "I loved Honors 201 and working for Dr. Xu. That's where I first heard about the Goldwater. I came to UAH at just the right time. Dr. Xu was picking up a bunch of undergraduates, and, working with the application, I could see where I fit in." His Capstone project involves plasma jet modeling where low temperature plasma and plasma devices have been shown to sterilize biological materials without incurring thermal damage. 'It's been great working with Dr. Xu!' the student says. 'I can't express that enough. He's been very supportive. Helping out, but not hand holding. He offers guidance but lets me go into the muck. I really appreciate that. I'm a computationalist, whereas his line is very experimental. Somehow I'm a computationalist who likes to experiment a lot!'"

PRC 30 Years and Beyond

PRC 30th Anniversary Metrics

- 300	Students Receiving Advanced Degrees	(10 per year)
- \$60	Million In External Funding	(2 million/year, \$200K/graduate)
- 438	Refereed Journal Article	(15 per year)

- 1,400 Students Through Propulsion Class (47 per year)

PRC 30th Anniversary Celebrations

- April 14, 2022 Banquet Celebrating our Alumni
- April 15, 2022 Proposition Symposion Featuring Alimi and Current Students

April 15, 2022 - Cookout at the Lab

PRC 30th Anniversary Vision Forward

- Continuing a legacy of excellence in traditional student production in the propulsion arena
- Equipping the future workforce for success in their professional careers