

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
On Track - Undergraduate Space Education (3)

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STANFORD SPACEFLIGHT INITIATIVE: LESSONS IN STUDENT SPACE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Abstract

A new age for spaceflight is beginning- one where private companies are lowering the cost and increasing access to space through market development. Growing this industry requires preparing talented individuals for the challenges, risks and rewards that are incumbent on entrepreneurial efforts in space. Recognizing this change in the space industry, a group of students from Stanford University founded The Stanford Spaceflight Initiative (SSI) with the mission of changing the space culture at Stanford by promoting space entrepreneurship and building a stronger space community on campus and beyond.

The need for a group such as SSI stems from the belief that the NewSpace industry could and should develop out from academic institutions - due to the inherent multidisciplinary aspects of space and market exploration. Furthermore the students at Stanford realized that the university is already very well positioned both geographically and from an entrepreneurial infrastructure standpoint, which gives SSI the unique ability to both analyze the industry and identify painpoints and create solutions to those problems.

To achieve the group's mission, the structure of SSI focuses its effort on two aspects: (1) generating excitement and ideas within the membership and (2) providing the infrastructure to turn those ideas into a reality. The organization has manifested into a robust speaker and workshop series, thinktank, and project teams managed by a core group of dedicated students. Within one year, SSI has achieved success growing to a membership of 100+ individuals representing every school on campus and hosting events ranging from startup nights to speaker forums with local startups such as Skybox Imaging to partnering with local institutions to educate and provide opportunities to the membership. SSI's achievements have given it the unique ability to discuss student space entrepreneurship and space entrepreneurship at Stanford and in Silicon Valley more broadly. Moreover, the group's ability to build a flourishing community so quickly has earned SSI official recognition by the University and the Department of Aeronautics and Astronautics as the hub for students interested in all aspects of space bringing it one step closer to making Stanford the hub for all of NewSpace.