

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
In Orbit - Postgraduate Space Education (4)

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MASTER OF SCIENCE DEGREE IN ASTRONAUTICAL ENGINEERING THROUGH DISTANCE
LEARNING**Abstract**

The Department of Astronautical Engineering at the University of Southern California (USC) focuses on space engineering education. In addition to full-time on-campus students its flagship program Master of Science in Astronautical Engineering reaches working professionals online through distance education. Since its inception in 2004, the Department awarded more than 500 Master's degrees to students from across the United States, Canada, and military installations abroad. Online students account for two thirds of the earned degrees. Continuing education with online coursework delivery has emerged as an integral feature of workforce development in the U.S. space industry and government centers. This paper discusses the origin, rationale, focus, structure, coursework, reach, and achievements of the USC Astronautics program, particularly its specifics in serving a large population of online students. It concludes with the lessons learned and outlines trends in program evolution.