

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Interactive Presentations - IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (IP)

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THE OUT ASTRONAUT PROJECT: EMPLOYING THE INSPIRATIONAL POWER OF
ASTRONAUTICS TO EMPOWER THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY IN SCIENCE AND SPACE.

Abstract

The Out Astronaut Project is a science outreach program to address the under-representation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) people in science and in the space industry. Presently, there are few out LGBTQ STEM professionals serving as role models to LGBTQ youth; more than 40 percent of LGBTQ people in STEM are not out and gay and bisexual students are less likely to follow an academic career. Notably, of over 560 individuals that have been selected as astronauts or cosmonauts, none have ever identified openly as a member of the LGBTQ community. The mission of the Out Astronaut Project is to select a member of the LGBTQ community through a three-phase competition open to individuals who openly embrace their role in the LGBTQ community, want to serve as role models to LGBTQ youth, and seek to become representatives of their community as a pioneer of astronautical science. The winning contestant will then train and fly as a scientist-astronaut trained by the international non-profit Project PoSSUM. The Out Astronaut Project's advisory board will contain a dozen prominent LGBTQ members currently contributing as STEM professionals in space-related fields who will be available to volunteer to talk to schools and organizations about the experiences of LGBTQ scientists. This presentation will discuss the ground work to develop this initiative and lessons moving forward.