

SWOSU Foundation “Launches” New Physics Scholarship Campaign

09.28.2016

SWOSU physics is “go for LAUNCH!”

The Southwestern Oklahoma State University physics program in Weatherford has begun a new scholarship campaign – “LAUNCH!” The campaign is sponsored by the SWOSU physics faculty and the SWOSU Foundation to help raise money for more scholarships to be given to students pursuing a degree in physics at SWOSU.

The SWOSU physics program has many notable alumni that helped shaped America’s space exploration history.

In the early 1960s, SWOSU Physics Professor J.R. Pratt saw a newspaper clipping for employment opportunities at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. The newly formed space agency was looking for employees to run a communications office on the ground called “Mission Control.”

Several SWOSU physics graduates followed their professor’s suggestion of applying and joined NASA to become some of the first employees in Mission Control. Some of these graduates include John Aaron, Tommy Weichel, James Bates and Gilbert Carman.

Each of these men made history as it was unfolding around them.

James Bates, Class of 1962, was one of the very first Mission Control analysts to assist in the flights of the first space mission, Mercury, and the Gemini and Apollo missions. Bates was inducted into the SWOSU Distinguished Alumni Hall of Fame in 1993.

John Aaron, Class of 1964, was a flight controller during the Gemini and Apollo programs. He is credited with saving Apollo 12 when shortly after launch it was struck by lightning. He was also a crucial part in the efforts of saving Apollo 13, which earned him the highly regarded nickname of “steely-eyed missile man.” Aaron was inducted into the SWOSU Distinguished Alumni Hall of Fame in 2006.

Tommy Weichel, Class of 1964, was a flight controller during the Apollo missions and was part of the team that reconstructed the equipment to be used on board Apollo 13, saving the astronauts while using the Lunar Module as a lifeboat.

Gilbert Carman, Class of 1967, joined NASA shortly after graduating and became a NASA mission planner during the Apollo and Space Shuttle programs. He was trained in the specialized field of mechanics and quickly became an expert in the maneuvers that would get the Lunar Module to the surface of the moon and back. He then worked with the Space Shuttle and became the acknowledged expert in Shuttle entry guidance and trained many controllers who were responsible for the landing of the Shuttle. Carman was awarded the SWOSU President’s Award of Merit in 2015.

Now, there’s a new generation of SWOSU physics students who hold the same promise. The SWOSU physics program is one of the most comprehensive in the state and region. The “LAUNCH!” campaign will help fund scholarships to help encourage

more physics students and help “launch” a new generation of SWOSU scientists and engineers.

To make a gift or pledge to the “LAUNCH!” SWOSU physics scholarship campaign, go online to www.GiveToSWOSU.com and choose “LAUNCH!” on the dropdown menu or mail a check made payable to “SWOSU Foundation” with “Launch! Physics” in the memo line to:

SWOSU Foundation
Burton House
100 Campus Drive
Weatherford, OK 73096

For more information, visit www.SWOSUFoundation.com or call Brandi Rizzi at 580-774-3156.