National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Experiment Support Scientist

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Experiment Support Scientist
Life Sciences,
Flight Payload Operations

Contractor, Lockheed Martin
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My daily work consists of a lot of time on the computer, including writing technical documents, analyzing data on different computer programs, and working with a database. I also have contact with many people outside of my group, such as companies that support science work. The majority of my job involves arranging what needs to be done to support experiments being flown in space, and organizing data related to the experiments.

Areas of expertise:

- Life science payloads

How I first became interested in this profession:

Space as a whole has always interested me, as have the sciences. The astrobiology course I took in college clarified my interest in space and the related space life sciences, Being part of the work NASA does is inspiring because I see NASA as an organization that pushes forward with humans doing the most amazing things.

What helped prepare me for this job:

The general science background I received in college, and being organized in the past helped me prepare. Also, having worked with computers a lot in school made me feel comfortable to handle that aspect of my job.

My role models or inspirations:

I don't have a specific set of names, but I guess people who pushed forward in the frontier they were working in. Pioneers in any field are an inspiration. Astronauts, of course, are inspiring, because they go where so few others get to go, really pushing the limits.

My education and training:

- B.S., Biological Sciences, Stanford University

My career path:

- During my undergraduate work, I took an astrobiology class, which focused on many areas of space-biology research and highlighted research being done nearby at Ames Research Center.
- After graduation, I investigated how to get involved at Ames and found a job in nutrition research.
- Currently, I serve on the data management team for a payload to be flown aboard STS-107.

What I like about my job:

I am always learning new and exiting things about the space program and enjoy communicating with people from all parts of the science community. I enjoy being part of a big team with the common goal of putting science into space, and enjoy the satisfaction that some new knowledge has been gained when a project is completed.

What I don't like about my job:

Sometimes the exciting science part of the job seems very distant because it feels like a long time before the rewards pay off. One can work on a payload for years before the experiment is launched. Also, the detailed documentation must be done in a very specific way.

My advice to anyone interested in this occupation:

A science background is a must, but managing experience may also be beneficial in managing payloads. In this occupation, you must balance communicating with science people while keeping a managing and operations perspective. Remember to always tell people what interests you, and gain experience whereever you can, especially through internships.

Additional Resources:

- American Institute of Biological Sciences
  http://www.aibs.org
- American Physiological Society
  http://www.faseb.org/aps
- American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
  http://www.biophysics.org/biophys/society/biohome.htm
- American Society for Microbiology
  http://www.asmusa.org
- Astrobiology Summer Academy
  http://academy.arc.nasa.gov/
- Biotechnology Industry Organization
  http://www.bio.org/welcome.html
- Education Pays Calculator
  http://www.educationpays.org/calc.asp
- Earth to Orbit: Engineering Design Challenges
  http://eto.nasa.gov/
- Graduate Student Researchers Program
  http://spacelink.nasa.gov/Instructional.Materials/NASA.Educational.Products/Graduate.Student.Researchers.Program.Brochure/.index.html
- MATHCOUNTS Competition
  http://mathcounts.org/
- Minority University Research and Education Programs
  http://mured.nasaprs.com/
- NASA Cooperative Education Program for college students
  http://spacelink.nasa.gov/Educational.Services/NASA.Education.Programs/Student.Support/NASA.Cooperative.Education.Program/.index.html
- NASA Jobs
  http://nasajobs.nasa.gov/
- NASA Office of Life and Microgravity Sciences and Applications
  http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/olmsa/
- NASA SHARP Internship Program for high-schoolers
  http://www.mtsibase.com/sharp/
- NASA Student Employment
  http://nasajobs.nasa.gov/stud_opps/employment/index.htm
- NASA Student Involvement Program student contests
  http://www.nsip.net/index.cfm
- Order NASA career videos such as "Engineers: Turning Ideas into Reality," "Careers: Aerospace Engineer" or "Reaching for the Stars" from NASA CORE.
  http://core.nasa.gov
- Revolutionary Vehicle Concepts and Systems student competition
  http://avst.larc.nasa.gov/competitions.html
- Student's Guide to Astrobiology
  http://www.astrobiology.com/student.html
- Tech-Interns.com
  http://www.tech-interns.com/

Please take a moment to evaluate this product at:
http://ehb2.gsfc.nasa.gov/edcats/educational_topic

Your evaluation and suggestions are vital to continually improving NASA educational materials.
Thank you.