*It’s not only a no-brainer to include as many bright minded scientists and engineers from around the world to innovate and create the next technology in space exploration, but it’s our responsibility to future generations of humans to continue to explore and ‘map’ the universe around us so they too, like Captain James Cook, can hold a map and not get lost.*

*My name is Charlie Nitschelm, I’m 20 years old studying mechanical engineering at the University of New Hampshire, and I believe I should be selected as the next Student Astronaut.*

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*It wasn’t until December 21st, 2016 when I realized what I wanted to become in the future. I was always intrigued by all the space movies but watching a 10-ton rocket booster plunge through the atmosphere, flip on its liquid engines, and accelerate it to a complete stop precisely upon touching down, was a pivotal moment to me.*

*I went from a mathematics major directly to mechanical engineering. I decided right then I wanted to join the aerospace industry and help us get to space.*

*When I arrived as a freshman at UNH, I joined an a Cappella group. Singing in an a Cappella group has showed me some goals would not be possible without teamwork. While singing a Cappella never helped me understand the stress-strain curve, for example, it taught me that some goals are bigger than one person.*

*Getting hands on experience, whether it be performing tensile tests in a lab or creating a rocket-powered, steel enforced baby crib car, has been crucial to my development as an engineer.*

*To go through the process of designing, building, and testing inventions really provides you with life-long skills.*

*The next student astronaut needs to have a love for engineering, a love to make things, no matter how useless. They need to have the ability to share their love for space, encourage others to join the space community.*

*I hope one day to do my duty and also inspire the next generation of aerospace engineers and scientists to do the same.*

*Building rockets was not the only way that I started learning about astronautics. I also started reading more books, both on the physics and engineering of space. People really do underestimate the power of books. Endurance by Scott Kelly, a man who recently spent nearly a year in space, talked very highly of Star City, Russia, the birthing ground of cosmonauts.*

*I don’t think the immense amount of knowledge and experience I am expecting these cosmonauts have will scare me away, it will only make me work harder to become the best person I can be for the job. This experience will help me achieve my goal to become an astronaut.*

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