

Esther Putman

Doctoral Student, Aerospace Engineering Sciences

Bioastronautics

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Research Interests

Spaceflight physiology, neurovestibular adaptations to spaceflight, virtual reality, astronaut training, aerospace medicine, space life and physical sciences, human factors, spacesuit design, emergency medical procedures for space missions.

Education

Ph.D., Aerospace Engineering, University of Colorado Boulder. Expected May 2024

Dissertation work: *Multi-environment adaptive virtual reality training as a potential countermeasure to spaceflight-associated neuroplasticity.*

M.S., Aerospace Engineering, University of Colorado Boulder. May 2021

Thesis: *Investigating the role of galvanic vestibular stimulation on small motion perception and overall performance in manual control and functional mobility tasks.* Advisor: Dr. Torin Clark

M.S., Engineering Management, University of Colorado Boulder. May 2021

B.S., Biology, University of Kentucky, May 2019 (Magna Cum Laude, Departmental Honors, Lewis Honors College)

B.S., Neuroscience, University of Kentucky, May 2019 (Magna Cum Laude, Departmental Honors, Lewis Honors College)

Senior Capstones: (1) Exploring the role of hands-on STEM exposure on student confidence pursuing STEM careers

(2) Investigating bacterial virulence in microgravity environments on board the International Space Station

Experience

Graduate Research Assistant | University of Colorado Boulder | 2019-present

- Created spaceflight mission-relevant training scenarios in VR using Unity to improve skill retention for long duration exploration missions.
- Assessed neurophysiology during VR training using EEG and fNIRs.
- Developed novel training algorithm in Python for adaptive difficulty adjustment increasing user engagement and training impact.
- Responsible for IRB approval, human subjects testing, technical writing, and communicating project status with NASA stakeholders.

Biological Systems Engineering Intern | Space Tango, Lexington, KY | 2016-2019

- Collaborated on the development, turnover, and integration of over 50 payloads for life and physical sciences research on the International Space Station.
- Responsible for requirements creation and validation for hardware that interfaced with biological materials.

- Customer-facing role developing experiment plans and shaping proposals to facilitate NASA requirement compliance and hardware integration.
- Translated student payload proposals into actionable research plans.
- Communicated experimental design practices and scientific value of payloads to internal and external stakeholders through written and verbal mediums.

Space Systems Intern- Brooke Owens Fellow | Vulcan, Seattle, WA | May-August 2018

- Utilized satellite Earth observations to assist development of modeling and prediction algorithms addressing large-scale global issues like illegal blast fishing, elephant poaching, and coral reef conservation.
- Connected AI teams with training data sets from open-source satellite imagery identified and cataloged by my research of primary symptoms.
- Explored the experience of women in STEM to inform gender-inclusive hiring practices.

NASA Space Life Sciences Training Program Researcher | NASA Ames Research Center | June-August 2017

- Analyzed biomarkers of cellular senescence in bone marrow stem cells to explore mechanisms of astronaut bone density loss.
- Responsible for animal handling and dissection as well as data collection using cell culturing, flow cytometry, histology, and micro-CT.
- Selected for poster and lightning talk at 2017 American Society for Gravitational and Space Research Conference.
- Team project: Coordinated bacterial payload piggy-back missions on stratospheric weather balloon launches in the path of the 2017 solar eclipse. SOP creation and project management to study survivability in a Martian analog environment.

Research Assistant | Sander's Brown Center on Aging, Lexington, KY | 2014-2017

- Researched traumatic brain injury, Alzheimer's, and vascular dementia through confocal microscopy and immunohistochemistry.
- Responsible for fluorescent staining, imaging, and analysis of 40µm coronal mouse brain sections.
- Selected as 2015 IES Brain Research Foundation Fellow.

Peer Reviewed Journal Publications

Putman, E. J., Galvan-Garza, R. C., & Clark, T. K. (2021). The Effect of Noisy Galvanic Vestibular Stimulation on Learning of Functional Mobility and Manual Control Nulling Sensorimotor Tasks. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 15.

Putman, E.J. (2021). Operational Performance in Functional Mobility and Manual Control Tasks Using Galvanic Vestibular Stimulation (Master's Thesis, University of Colorado at Boulder).

Furman, J. L., Sompol, P., Kraner, S. D., Pleiss, M. M., **Putman, E. J.**, Dunkerson, J., ... & Norris, C. M. (2016). Blockade of astrocytic calcineurin/NFAT signaling helps to normalize hippocampal synaptic function and plasticity in a rat model of traumatic brain injury. *Journal of Neuroscience*, 36(5), 1502-1515

Presentations and Posters

1. Galvan-Garza, R.C., **Putman, E.**, Clark, T.K., Ziegler, M. "Galvanic Vestibular Stimulation for Training" (abstract and presentation) Neuroergonomics Conference, Munich, German, 11-16 Sep, 2021.
2. **Putman, E.** "Bacterial Virulence in Spaceflight Environments: Utilizing Autonomous CubeLabs to Facilitate Research on the International Space Station." Astronaut Scholarship Program Technical Session (Aug 2018), Washington DC, Talk
3. **Putman, E.**, Cheng-Campbell, M., Stimpel, O., Almeida, E., Blaber, E. "The role of CDKN1a/p21 in cellular senescence of bone marrow stem cells under spaceflight stressors." American Society for Gravitational and Space Research Annual Conference (Oct 2017), Seattle, WA, Poster
4. **Putman, E.**, Cheng-Campbell, M., Stimpel, O., Almeida, E., Blaber, E. "The role of CDKN1a/p21 in cellular senescence of bone marrow stem cells under spaceflight stressors." American Society for Gravitational and Space Research Annual Conference (Oct 2017), Seattle WA, Lightning Talk
5. **Putman, E.** et.al, "NFAT 4 is upregulated in astrocytes in traumatic brain injury model". Showcase of Undergraduate Research (Apr 2017), Lexington KY, Poster
6. Putman, E. "Intracranial pressure and cognition in microgravity: physiological barriers of long duration space flight." Scholars in Biology Research Showcase (Nov 2015), Lexington KY, Poster
7. **Putman, E.**, et. al "NFAT 4 is upregulated in astrocytes in traumatic brain injury model" Irene and Eric Simon Brain Research Fellowship Lunch and Learn (Nov 2015), New York City NY, Talk
8. **Putman, E.**, et. al, "Investigating the role of NFAT 4 in inflammatory process of astrocyte activation." Bluegrass Society for Neuroscience Spring Neuroscience Day (Apr 2015), Lexington KY, Poster
9. **Putman, E.**, et. al, "Investigating the role of NFAT 4 in inflammatory process of astrocyte activation." Marksby Symposium Poster Presentation (Nov 2014), Lexington KY, Poster

Teaching Experience

Graduate Teaching Fellow- University of Colorado Boulder

Linear Control Systems Engineering (Fall '19)

Introduction to Humans in Aviation (Spring '20, Summer '20, Fall '20, Fall '21)

Human Factors Engineering (Spring '20, Summer '20, Spring '21, Spring '22)

Outreach Experience

2021 Invited Speaker- Women of Aeronautics and Astronautics CU Chapter

2021 Guest lecturer on developing for HoloLens in Unity for CU Boulder NASA Suits Challenge Club

2021 Meet a Scientist Volunteer at Boulder Public Library- AR with Google Cardboard demonstration

2020 Invited Speaker- Lafayette High School Upcoming Stem Scholars Club
2019 International Astronautical Congress STEM Days Presenter: Hands on experiments about science on ISS
2019 Kentucky Aerospace Discovery Day Volunteer
2019 Space Trek Space Science Camp for Girls- Invited Speaker
2019 Invited Speaker- Girl Scout's Engineering Lock-in
2019 University of Kentucky Engineering Day Volunteer
2019 Kentucky Science Center Girl's STEM Club Volunteer- Chemical Engineering Demonstrations
2019 STEM Exposure in the Classroom, Student Teacher
2019 American Society for Gravitational and Space Research Advocacy on the Hill
2018 Neuroscience in the Classroom, Student Teacher
2018 American Society for Gravitational and Space Research Advocacy on the Hill
2018 US Science and Engineering Festival Presenter with Center for Advancement of science in space.
2017 Kentucky Aerospace Day at the Capitol
2016-2018 Higher Orbits Suborbital Advisory board member and volunteer/speaker for "Go for Launch" camps.

Grants and Fellowships

2020 National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellow
2018 Brooke Owens Fellow
2016 Chellgren Research Fellow
2015 BS/MD Accelerated Pre-Medical Program
2015 IES Brain Research Foundation Fellow

Honors and Awards

2018 Women in Aerospace Foundation Scholar
2018 AIAA Diversity Scholar
2018 Astronaut Scholar
2015-2019 Otis A. Singletary Scholar
2015-2019 T.W. Lewis Honors College
2015 Writing, Rhetoric, and Digital Studies Excellence in Composition Award

Media

Behind the Blue podcast: *"UK Senior Esther Putman Connects the Arts and Aerospace as She Reaches for the Stars"*. December 2018
Ampersand Magazine *"Reaching for the Stars: Biology senior Esther Putman has combined her love of biology, astronomy and engineering to follow her dream of a career in aerospace medicine."* April 2019
UKNow: *"UK Senior Wins Astronaut Scholarship, Brooke Owens Fellowship"*. Oct. 2018

Additional Certifications and Experience

1. Basic Life Support (CPR and AED) Certified, American Heart Association (2020)
2. University of Kentucky Resident Advisor (2016-2017)