

Kyle Franson

Curriculum Vitae

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Education

Ph.D. Astronomy, The University of Texas at Austin

Expected Spring 2025

Advisor: Brendan P. Bowler

B.S. Physics, University of Michigan

Sep. 2015 – May 2019

Minor in Computer Science

Thesis: Orbit Extension and Refinement for Trans-Neptunian Objects Found in the Dark Energy Survey

Advisor: David W. Gerdes

Positions

The University of Texas at Austin

University Fellow

Starting Sep. 2024

NSF Graduate Research Fellow

2021 – Present

Graduate Research Assistant

2019 – 2021

University of Michigan

Undergraduate Research Assistant

2016 – 2019

Research Interests

- Understanding the formation, evolution, and atmospheres of long-period giant planets.
- Efficiently discovering and imaging new giant planets through astrometric accelerations.
- Testing evolutionary models with direct mass measurements of substellar companions.

Awards and Honors

University Graduate Continuing Fellowship

2024

UT Graduate School Professional Development Award

2022

NSF Graduate Research Fellowship

2021

Frank N. Edmonds, Jr. Memorial Fellowship in Astronomy

2021

McDonald Observatory B.O.V. Student Second Year Defense Award

2021

Grants

James Webb Space Telescope, NASA/STScI

\$25k (Sci PI) Establishing the Formation of AF Lep b with NIRCам: The Lowest-Mass Imaged Exoplanet with a Dynamical Mass

Cycle 2 DD

Keck Observing Support, NASA

\$5k (Sci PI) Establishing the Dynamical Mass and Orbit of AF Lep b

2023

\$65k (Sci PI) Imaging Giant Planets Around Young Accelerating Stars

2021 – 2023

WIYN NN-Explore Observing Support, NASA

\$6k (Sci PI) Optimizing Target Selection of Direct Imaging Planet Campaigns using Accelerating Stars

2021

PI Observing Programs

James Webb Space Telescope

6.4 hours (PI)	Establishing the Formation of AF Lep b with NIRCам: The Lowest-Mass Imaged Exoplanet with a Dynamical Mass	JWST Cycle 2 DD
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Keck Observatory

6 nights (PI)	Imaging Giant Planets Around Young Accelerating Stars	NASA/Keck (2021A/B, 2022B, 2023A/B) NOIRLab/Keck (2023A, 2024A)
1 night (PI)	Establishing the Dynamical Mass and Orbit of the Giant Planet AF Lep b	NOIRLab/Keck (2024A) NASA/Keck (2023B)

Subaru

4 nights (PI)	Imaging Giant Planets Around Young Accelerating Stars	Gemini-Subaru Exchange (2022A, 2023A/B, 2024B)
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VLT/SPHERE

56 hours (PI)	Imaging Giant Planets Around Young Accelerating Stars	ESO (P109 – P113)
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WIYN

7.3 nights (PI)	Optimizing Target Selection of Direct Imaging Campaigns using Accelerating Stars	NASA NN-Explore (2021B, 2022B, 2023A, 2024A, 2024B)
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SOAR

2.5 nights (PI)	Optimizing Target Selection of Direct Imaging Campaigns using Accelerating Stars	NOIRLab (2021A, 2021B, 2022B)
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MINERVA-Australis

108 hours (PI)	Enabling Dynamical Mass Measurements of Planets Around Accelerating Stars	NASA NN-Explore (2023A – 2024B)
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Hobby-Eberly Telescope

74 hours (PI)	Enabling Dynamical Mass Measurements of Planets Around Accelerating Stars	McDonald Observatory (2023-1 – 2024-2)
9 hours (PI)	Testing Evolutionary Models with a New Substellar Dynamical Mass	McDonald Observatory (2019-3, 2020-1, 2020-3)

Harlan J Smith Telescope

22 nights (PI)	Optimizing Target Selection of Direct Imaging Campaigns using Accelerating Stars	McDonald Observatory (2021-3 – 2022-3, 2023-3 – 2024-2)
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Scientific Presentations

Contributed Talk	Exoplanets V, Leiden NL	June 2024
Invited Talk	UC Santa Cruz PLUNCH Seminar, Santa Cruz CA	May 2024
Invited Talk	University of Hawaii IfA Seminar, Honolulu HI	April 2024
Contributed Talk	AAS 243 Winter Meeting, New Orleans LA	Jan. 2024
Invited Talk	Notre Dame Astrophysics Seminar, South Bend IN	Sep. 2023
Contributed Talk	GMT Community Science Meeting, Washington DC	Sep. 2023
Invited Talk	Exocoffee Seminar, MPIA, virtual	July 2023
Contributed Talk	ERES VII, New Haven CT	June 2023
Contributed Talk	SACNAS NDiSTEM Conference, San Juan PR	Oct. 2022
Contributed Talk	Keck Science Meeting, Pasadena CA	Sep. 2022
Contributed Talk	In the Spirit of Lyot 2022, Leiden NL	June 2022

Publications

First-author publications: 4, Total publications: 19
Total first-author citations: 75, Total citations: 419. (NASA/ADS)
First-author *h*-index: 4, Total *h*-index: 13.

First-Author Publications:

4. [Astrometric Accelerations as Dynamical Beacons: A Giant Planet Imaged inside the Debris Disk of the Young Star AF Lep](#)
Franson, K.; Bowler, B. P.; Zhou, Y.; et al. [16 total]; 2023, ApJL, 950, L19
3. [Dynamical Mass of the Young Brown Dwarf Companion PZ Tel B](#)
Franson, K.; Bowler, B. P.; 2023, AJ, 165, 246
2. [Astrometric Accelerations as Dynamical Beacons: Discovery and Characterization of HIP 21152 B, the First T-Dwarf Companion in the Hyades](#)
Franson, K.; Bowler, B. P.; Bonavita, M.; et al. [31 total]; 2023, AJ, 165, 39
1. [Dynamical Mass of the Young Substellar Companion HD 984 B](#)
Franson, K.; Bowler, B. P.; Brandt, T. D.; Dupuy, T. J.; Tran, Q. H.; Brandt, G. M.; Li, Y.; Kraus, A. L.; 2022, AJ, 163, 50

Co-Author Publications:

19. [The JWST Early Release Science Program for Direct Observations of Exoplanetary Systems. V. Do Self-consistent Atmospheric Models Represent JWST Spectra? A Showcase with VHS 1256–1257 b](#)
Petrus, S.; Whiteford, N.; Patapis, P.; et al. [122 total]; 2024, ApJL, 966, L11
18. [Deep Pa \$\beta\$ Imaging of the Candidate Accreting Protoplanet AB Aur b](#)
Biddle, L. I.; Bowler, B. P.; Zhou, Y.; **Franson, K.**; Zhang, Z.; 2024, AJ, 164, 172
17. [The discovery of two new benchmark brown dwarfs with precise dynamical masses at the stellar-substellar boundary](#)
Rickman, E. L.; Ceva, W.; Matthews, E. C.; Ségransan, D.; Bowler, B. P.; Forveille, T.; **Franson, K.**; Hagelberg, J.; Udry, S.; Vigan, A.; 2024, A&A, 684, A88
16. [The JWST Early Release Science Program for Direct Observations of Exoplanetary Systems. IV. NIRISS Aperture Masking Interferometry Performance and Lessons Learned](#)
Sallum, S.; Ray, S.; Kammerer, J.; et al. [123 total]; 2024, ApJL, 963, L2
15. [ELemental abundances of Planets and brown dwarfs Imaged around Stars \(ELPIS\). I. Potential Metal Enrichment of the Exoplanet AF Lep b and a Novel Retrieval Approach for Cloudy Self-luminous Atmospheres](#)
Zhang, Z.; Mollière, P.; Hawkins, K.; Manea, C.; Fortney, J. J.; Morley, C. V.; Skemer, A.; Marley, M. S.; Bowler, B. P.; Carter, A. L.; **Franson, K.**; Maas, Z. G.; Sneden, C.; AJ, 166, 198
14. [Surveying nearby brown dwarfs with HGCA: direct imaging discovery of a faint, high-mass brown dwarf orbiting HD 176535 A](#)
Li, Y.; Brandt, T. D.; Brandt, G. M.; et al. [20 total]; 2023, MNRAS, 522, 5622
13. [The JWST Early Release Science Program for Direct Observations of Exoplanetary Systems I: High-contrast Imaging of the Exoplanet HIP 65426 b from 2 to 16 \$\mu\$ m](#)
Carter, A. L.; Hinkley, S.; Kammerer, J.; et al. [111 total]; 2023, ApJL, 951, L20
12. [Rotation Periods, Inclinations, and Obliquities of Cool Stars Hosting Directly Imaged Substellar Companions: Spin-Orbit Misalignments Are Common](#)
Bowler, B. P.; Tran, Q. G.; Zhang, Z.; Morgan, M.; Ashok, K. B.; Blunt, S.; Bryan, M. L.; Evans, A. E.; **Franson, K.**; Huber, D.; Nagpal, V.; Wu, Y.; Zhou, Y.; 2023, AJ, 165, 164
11. [The JWST Early-release Science Program for Direct Observations of Exoplanetary Systems II: A 1 to 20 \$\mu\$ m Spectrum of the Planetary-mass Companion VHS 1256-1257 b](#)
Miles, B. E.; Biller, B. A.; Patapis, P.; et al. [111 total]; 2023, ApJL, 946, L6

10. [The McDonald Accelerating Stars Survey: Architecture of the Ancient Five-planet Host System Kepler-444](#)
Zhang, Z.; Bowler, B. P.; Dupuy, T. J.; et al. [14 total]; 2023, AJ, 165, 2
9. [A Jupiter Analog Orbiting The Nearby M Dwarf GJ 463](#)
Endl, M.; Robertson, P.; Cochran, W. D.; MacQueen, P. J.; Bowler, B. P.; **Franson, K.**; Holcomb, R.; Beard, C.; Isaacson, H.; Howard, A. W.; Lubin, J.; 2022, AJ, 164, 6
8. [A Mini-Neptune from TESS and CHEOPS Around the 120 Myr Old AB Dor Member HIP 94235](#)
Zhou, G.; Wirth, C. P.; Huang, C. X.; et al. [39 total]; 2022, AJ, 163, 289
7. [The McDonald Accelerating Stars Survey \(MASS\): Discovery of a Long-period Substellar Companion Orbiting the Old Solar Analog HD 47127](#)
Bowler, B. P.; Endl, M.; Cochran, W. D.; et al. [15 total]; 2021, ApJL, 913, L26
6. [The McDonald Accelerating Stars Survey \(MASS\): White Dwarf Companions Accelerating the Sun-like Stars 12 Psc and HD 159062](#)
Bowler, B. P.; Cochran, W. C.; Endl, M.; **Franson, K.**; Brandt, T. D.; Dupuy, T. J.; MacQueen, P. J.; Kratter, K. M.; Mawet, D.; Ruane, G.; 2021, AJ, 161, 106
5. [Dynamical Classification of Trans-Neptunian Objects Detected by the Dark Energy Survey](#)
Khain, T.; Becker, J. C.; Lin, H. W.; et al. [56 total]; 2020, AJ, 159, 133
4. [Trans-Neptunian Objects Found in the First Four Years of the Dark Energy Survey](#)
Bernardinelli, P. H.; Bernstein, G. M.; Sako, M.; et al. [65 total]; 2020, ApJS, 247, 32
3. [Evidence for color dichotomy in the primordial Neptunian Trojan population](#)
Lin, H. W.; Gerdes, D. W.; Hamilton, S. J.; et al. [48 total]; 2019, Icarus, 321, 426
2. [Dynamical Analysis of Three Distant Trans-Neptunian Objects with Similar Orbits](#)
Khain, T.; Becker, J. C.; Adams, F. C.; et al. [66 total]; 2018, AJ, 156, 6
1. [Discovery and Dynamical Analysis of an Extreme Trans-Neptunian Object with a High Orbital Inclination](#)
Becker, J. C.; Khain, T.; Hamilton, S. J.; et al. [66 total]; 2018, AJ, 156, 81

White Papers:

1. [A Dynamically Informed Planet Search: Using Astrometric Accelerations to Directly Image Mature Giant Planets](#)
Franson, K.; Bowler, B. P.; Teixeira, K.; et al. [16 total]; 2024, Strategic Exoplanet Initiatives with HST and JWST

Service and Outreach

Referee for A&A, ApJ	2023 – Present
TAURUS/REU Programs	
Seminar Co-Lead	Summer 2022 – Present
Informal Mentor	Summer 2021 – Present
Starbound Foundation (<i>Elementary School Planetarium Outreach</i>)	
Co-Organizer & Volunteer	Fall 2021 – Present
UT Girl Day Volunteer	Spring 2020 – Present
UT Astronomy Undergraduate Mentor	Spring 2019 – Present

Press Coverage

- **A Giant Planet Imaged Inside the Debris Disk of the Young Star AF Lep** (Franson et al. 2023):
[NYTimes], [Sky & Telescope], [Universe Today], [Keck Observatory], [McDonald Observatory]