

Dr. Jessica Meir, NASA astronaut and multidisciplinary scientist, we honor you today for your exemplary leadership in the field of marine biology and physiology and your record-breaking achievements in the NASA space program.

Born in Caribou, Maine, to parents of Swedish, Iraqi, and Jewish heritage, you indulged your curiosity for our planet from a young age. To some, Maine in winter might seem like an “extreme environment,” but your Swedish mother nurtured your love and exploration of the outdoors in all weather.

You followed that curiosity throughout your accomplished career: with a BA in biology from Brown, a master’s of science in space studies from the International Space University, and a PhD in marine biology from Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC–San Diego. You advanced our understanding of how life exists in extreme environments. Your research on oxygen consumption of diving penguins and elephant seals, high-flying geese, and human physiology has taken you to the NASA Aquarius underwater habitat in the waters off Key Largo, Florida, on diving expeditions in the Antarctic and Belize, and in reduced-gravity aircraft. (This is all making living through a little cold in the Maine winter seem a lot less extreme....).

You joined the faculty of Harvard Medical School in 2012, and your research has earned awards and fellowships from the National Science Foundation, the American Physiological Society, the Department of Defense, NASA, Lockheed Martin Space Operations, and numerous others.

You used your scientific career to propel yourself on a different trajectory and to an even more extreme environment. In September 2019, as a member of the twenty-first NASA astronaut class, you served as flight engineer for a crew of Russian and American astronauts when you launched from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Russia aboard the Soyuz spacecraft.

You smashed through the glass ceiling on your flight up to the International Space Station on that mission. There, you and your proclaimed “Space Sister” Christina Koch stood on the shoulders of generations of women in STEM and the astronaut corps to conduct the first three all-female space walks in history. You described that as feeling like just another day at work, but back here on Earth, we were looking up at you with our students, children, friends, family and colleagues, celebrating all the gender identities, cultures, nationalities, and races that you and astronauts that came before you brought up into space.

You spent 205 days in space, completing 3,280 orbits and a trip of 86.9 million miles. You and your crew contributed to hundreds of experiments in biology, Earth science, human research, physical sciences, and technology development. On that trip, and throughout your career, you have been signaling to the next generation of STEM students and children of all identities that there are many ways to be a scientist. And that our work is stronger when we celebrate and recognize all the intersecting identities that make us human.

President Rose, on behalf of the College, I am honored to present Dr. Jessica Meir for the degree of doctor of science, *honoris causa*.