

# Commercial platform offers exposure at space station

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Researchers will be able to expose experiments to the weightlessness and vacuum of space by using a new commercial platform outside of International Space Station (ISS).

NanoRacks LLC will develop and operate the External Platform Program (EPP) to take advantage of the only orbiting lab that offers long-term, repeat access to the unique environment of unpressurized space. NanoRacks is a private company already operating research facilities under a NASA Space Act Agreement for use of the station's U.S. National Laboratory.

The EPP and equipment will be developed and operated using only commercial funding. NASA will contribute [space station](#) hardware and resources such as power and data transmission systems. The Center for the Advancement of Science in Space (CASIS), which manages the portion of the station operated as a U.S. National Laboratory, will reserve the first external platform site for commercial researchers. The external platform, scheduled to be launched by 2014, will provide low-cost access to space. It is designed to encourage users to test materials, [biological samples](#), sensors and sophisticated electronics outside the space station, which orbits 240 miles above Earth.

"This program opens the door to allow commercial users to fully utilize not only the U.S. National Laboratory in a pressurized environment but also outside," said ISS National Laboratory Manager Marybeth Edeen. "It's another example how companies are investing their own money to

take advantage of this unique national resource."

NanoRacks selected Astrium North America as a team member in the development of the EPP facility. The program capitalizes on the history and strengths of the two companies in providing external payload platforms, operating commercial facilities, and using off-the-shelf hardware, standard interfaces and existing space station data and power systems.

The contributions by NanoRacks and Astrium are the most recent example of NASA efforts to expand the station's research capacity through innovative partnerships with commercial companies.

"This new capability offers unique opportunities for the research community and industry to engage in exciting areas of study, including materials and observational sciences," said CASIS Interim Executive Director Jim Royston.

NanoRacks operates platforms inside the U.S. National Laboratory, which also were financed and developed solely by the commercial company and its partners.

**More information:** For information about research on the ISS, visit: [www.nasa.gov/station/research](http://www.nasa.gov/station/research)

Follow more information about NanoRacks, visit: [www.nanoracks.com](http://www.nanoracks.com)

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