



**OKLAHOMA SCHOOL of
SCIENCE and MATHEMATICS**

Oklahoma School of Science and Mathematics
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Oklahoma School of Science and Mathematics Alumni
Takes Flight with NASA's Mars Helicopter**

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. -- (April 19, 2021)- The Oklahoma School of Science and Mathematics (OSSM) announced today the involvement of one of its alumni in NASA's Mars Ingenuity helicopter. Ingenuity is a small robotic helicopter that has been located on Mars since February 18. It is the first aircraft on Mars and is intended to make the first powered and fully controlled atmospheric flight, from takeoff to landing, on any planet beyond Earth. NASA launched the helicopter on Monday, April 19. As it did, the aircraft carries with it ties to Oklahoma.

When NASA was designing the first flying machine to attempt flight to another planet, they looked to the open source community of drone and helicopter designers for a starting point. Among the parts that NASA needed was a LIDAR altimeter, a device that uses a laser to learn about the topography, or the shape of the surface, of a planet.

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They found that part at SparkFun, an online supplier of electronics parts that does just as much for hobbyists as they do for professional designers. Located in Niwot, Colo., SparkFun was founded in 2003 by Nathan Seidle, a 2000 graduate of the OSSM by way of Jenks High School in Oklahoma. Nathan credits OSSM with stoking his love of science and developing other important life skills.

“OSSM gave me the ability and confidence in college that opened doors I would never have gotten to explore otherwise,” said Nathan. “I was able to learn metal machining and rowed on crew, while taking a full engineering load. Even with 18 credit hours, my first two college semesters were a breeze because of my OSSM academics.”

He continued, “OSSM was a gigantic piece in the arch of my life. It was hard, extremely hard. OSSM taught me time management, how to work with people and other general life skills that would aid me through the rest of my life.”

The helicopter has a difficult challenge ahead of it as the Martian atmosphere is only 1 percent as dense as Earth’s, meaning the helicopter will have to work extra hard to achieve its first liftoff.

As the leading STEM and public high school in Oklahoma, OSSM has many graduates in the space industry, carrying on Oklahoma’s rich heritage in the aerospace industry.

About OSSM

Nationally ranked as a top public high school in the United States, OSSM provides a college-level, academically advanced curriculum in science and mathematics to juniors and seniors across the state. Created through legislative action in 1983, the two-year residential public high school serves all Oklahoma schools and students through statewide math contests, day workshops for students, residential summer academies for students, teacher professional development workshops, and outreach activities for students of varying ages.

For more information, call (405) 521-6436 or visit the website at www.ossm.edu.

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