

U of G Microbiology Graduate Among Astronaut Hopefuls!

March 16th, 2009

In a media event held today, Canadian Space Agency (CSA) President Steve MacLean introduced the Top 16 candidates who are participating in the Agency's National Astronaut Recruitment Campaign. Two of the sixteen candidates have connections to the University of Guelph and one is an alumnus of the Department.

[Ryan Hunter](#) graduated with a B.Sc. (Hons.) degree in Microbiology from the University of Guelph in 2001. He stayed in Guelph to complete a PhD in the Microbiology graduate program, under the supervision of (the late) Terry Beveridge. Ryan's thesis research investigated the interactions of bacteria with metals within biofilms and he completed his studies in fall, 2007. During his time at Guelph, Ryan was involved in the CSA and Senate, served on several committees at the University, College and Departmental levels, as well as being active in the community. In 2008, Ryan moved to the Department of Biology at MIT to begin postdoctoral work with Dianne Newman. Ryan is interested in the interactions between bacteria and their environments. He is currently involved in projects involving the pathogenesis of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* in the lungs of cystic fibrosis patients, and NASA-supported studies on the origins of life and life in extreme environments. Ryan is supported by a Postdoctoral Fellowship from the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

The National Astronaut Recruitment Campaign was launched in May 2008 and received more than 5000 applicants. The Top 16 candidates were selected following an intensive interview and testing process over a period of months. According to the CSA "They have also been tested for their creativity, teamwork skills and physical fitness to determine their ability to meet the demands of astronaut training and space flight." From this group, two candidates will be selected for astronaut training. The process will be completed in May.

The Department congratulates Ryan on his outstanding achievement in making the Top 16 list - and we wish him well in the coming weeks.

CBC News Video - March 16, 2009 ([quick time](#)) ([real media](#))

[Canadian Space Agency video coverage of press event.](#)

["At Guelph"](#) article