

# LAUDATIO *for Astronaut Frank Lee CULBERTSON, JR. NASA Astronaut (Former) upon the occasion of his honorary Doctorate Honoris Causa Chisinau, Republic of Moldova*

**B**y the decision of the University Senate Meeting held at 31 January 2012 The honorary title of Doctor Honoris Causa is conferred upon Astronaut Frank Lee CULBERTSON in recognition of his outstanding achievements and contributions to harnessing space, promotion of science and technology internationally, strengthening relations between nations and peoples, education of the young generation of engineers.

Distinguished Senators,  
Ladies and Gentlemen

The Technical University of Moldova is honoured today to bring its tribute with feelings of recognition and high appreciation to Astronaut Frank Lee Culbertson by conferring upon him the title of Doctor Honoris Causa for his major contributions to the development of science and technology, to the exploration of space, and to strengthening cooperation among nations.

Astronaut Frank Lee Culbertson was born on May 15, 1949, in Charleston, South Carolina, and graduated from Holly Hill High School, Holly Hill, South Carolina, in 1967. Is a 1971 graduate of the US Naval Academy at Annapolis with a Bachelor of Science degree in aerospace engineering. After graduation he became a fighter pilot and logged over 7000 flying hours in more than 50 different aircrafts and made over 350 carrier landings. He served aboard the USS Fox (CG-33) in the Gulf of Tonkin prior to reporting to flight training in Pensacola, Florida. After designation as a Naval Aviator at Beeville, Texas, in May 1973, he flew F-4 Phantom aircraft in VF-121, NAS Miramar, California, in VF-151 aboard the USS Midway and with the USAF in the 426th TFTS at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, where he served as Weapons and Tactics Instructor. Mr. Culbertson then served as the Catapult and Arresting Gear Officer for the USS John F. Kennedy (CV-67) until May 1981 when he was selected to attend the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School, Patuxent River, Maryland. Following graduation with distinction in June 1982, he was assigned to the Carrier Systems Branch of the Strike Aircraft Test Directorate where he served as Program Manager for all F-4 testing and as a test pilot for automatic carrier landing system tests and carrier



suitability. He was engaged in fleet replacement training in the F-14A Tomcat at VF-101, NAS Oceana, Virginia. He retired from active duty as a Navy Captain in 1997.

In May 1984, was selected as a NASA astronaut candidate and completed basic astronaut training in June 1985. Followed an eighteen-year career as Astronaut at NASA where he served in a variety of critical space-flight and management positions for NASA's Space Shuttle and Space Station programs. Technical assignments since then included: member of the team that redesigned and tested the Shuttle no-

sewheel steering, tires, and brakes; member of the launch support team at Kennedy Space Center for Shuttle flights 61-A, 61-B, 61-C, and 51-L; in 1986, worked at the NASA Headquarters Action Center in Washington, D.C., assisting with the Challenger accident investigations conducted by NASA, the Presidential Commission, and the Congress; lead astronaut at the Shuttle Avionics Integration Laboratory; leader of the First Emergency Egress Team; and lead spacecraft communicator in the Mission Control Center for seven missions. Following his first flight, he served as the Deputy Chief of the Flight Crew Operations Space Station Support Office as well as the lead astronaut for Space Station Safety. He was also a member of the team evaluating the hardware and procedures for the proposed mission to dock with the Russian Space Station Mir. Expedition 3 to the ISS was launched in August 2001 and returned to Earth in December 2001. Mr. Culbertson and his two Russian crewmates, cosmonauts Vladimir Dezhurov and Mikhail Tulin, lived and worked in space for 129 days. In total, he has logged over 144 days in space and over five hours of extra-vehicular activity (space walk) experience.

Following STS-51, Culbertson was Chief of the Astronaut Office Mission Support Branch, then Chief of the Johnson Space Center Russian Projects Office. In 1994, Culbertson was named Deputy Program Manager, Phase 1 Shuttle-Mir, and in 1995 became Manager of the Shuttle-Mir

Program. He was responsible for a multi-national team which executed nine Shuttle docking missions to the Russian Space Station Mir, with seven astronauts spending 30 months cumulatively on-board the Mir Station, plus all the associated science and docking hardware to ensure the success of the joint program, a precursor to the building of the joint International Space Station. Just prior to his current flight assignment, Culbertson spent one year as Deputy Program Manager for Operations of the International Space Station Program.

It is important to inform you about Mr. Culbertson's space flight experience:

- November 15-20, 1990 – STS-38 Atlantis piloting, a five-day mission during which the crew conducted Department of Defense operations. The mission concluded after 80 orbits of the Earth in 117 hours, 54 min., 28 sec., the first Shuttle to land in Florida since 1985;

- September 12-22, 1993 – STS-51 Discovery commander, a ten-day mission during which the crew deployed the U.S. Advanced Communications Technology Satellite and the Shuttle Pallet Satellite carrying US and German scientific experiments, including an ultraviolet spectrometer. A seven-hour EVA was also conducted to evaluate Hubble Space Telescope repair tools and methods. After the SPAS spacecraft had completed six days of free flight some 40 miles from Discovery, the crew completed a successful rendezvous and recovered the SPAS with the Shuttle's robot arm. The mission concluded with the first night landing of the Shuttle at the Kennedy Space Center. Mission duration was 158 Earth orbits in 236 hours, 11 min.;

- August 10, 2001- the Expedition-3 crew launched on aboard STS-105 Discovery and docked with the International Space Station on August 12, 2001. Culbertson lived and worked aboard the station for a total of 129 days, and was in command of the station for 117 days. The Expedition-3 crew left the station on December 15 aboard STS-108 Endeavour, landing at Kennedy Space Center, Florida, on December 17, 2001.

Astronaut Culbertson, an International Space Station commander, space shuttle commander and pilot, and NASA manager for the Phase 1 Shuttle-Mir Program, retired from NASA in 2002.

For the next 6 years Mr. Culbertson was employed as a Senior Vice President for SAIC, a company dedicated to delivering best-value services and solutions based on innovative applications of science and technology. Initially Mr. Culbertson worked as Program Manager of the Safety, Reliability and Quality Assurance contract at the NASA Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas, before advancing to business unit general management and Director of SAIC's Global Climate Change Programs.

In 2008 Mr. Culbertson, Jr. has joined Orbital

Sciences Corporation as Senior Vice President and Deputy General Manager of the Advanced Programs Group, based in Dulles, VA.

Mr. Culbertson holds membership of a number of organizations including Senior Fellow of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, member of the Association of Naval Aviators, Aircraft Owners & Pilots Association, the Aviation Boatswains Mate's Association, and the Association of Space Explorers.

Mr. Culbertson has received numerous honors for his contribution to the exploration of space including the Legion of Merit, the Navy Flying Cross, the Defense Superior Service Medal, the NASA Outstanding Leadership Medal, NASA Space Flight Medals, Navy Commendation Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, the Humanitarian Services Medal, and various other unit and service awards. He is a distinguished graduate of the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School. He has been awarded Honorary Doctor of Science Degrees, College of Charleston (1994), and Lander University (1999). He was also awarded the Komarov Certificate for Space Flight Achievement (1994), the AAS Flight Achievement Award for STS-51 (1994), Aviation Week and Space Technology 1997 Laurel for Achievement in Space, IEEE/ASME Award for Manager of the Year (1997), and the Space Center Rotary Club Stellar Award for 1998. Frank Culbertson was inducted into the U.S. Astronaut Hall of Fame on June 5, 2010.

I have tried to introduce you into Mr. Culbertson's career and professional achievements. But it wouldn't be fair not to tell you something about Astronaut Frank Lee Culbertson as a man and citizen of his country. You remember September 11, 2001 when we all on the Earth were shocked by the news about the terrorist attack and spent the day watching events unfold on television. On the morning of Sept. 11, Astronaut Frank Culbertson, a month into his mission as Commander of ISS Expedition 3, two hundred fifty miles (402250 m) above the Earth's surface, was the only American not on the planet at the time of the terrorist attacks. He - along with two Russian cosmonauts - witnessed the horrific events of Sept. 11 from the space.

Mr. Culbertson has a wonderful family. I am sure that many of his achievements are the result of the support and understanding he had from his wife former Rebecca Ellen Dora of Vincennes, Indiana, whom he married 1987. He has five children and five grandchildren.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We bring our feelings of honor and appreciation to Astronaut Frank Lee Culbertson for his service not only to the United States of America, but also to the whole mankind, for his staunchness and heroism, for the education of young people and for his love to mankind.