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Out of This World Student

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In just two days, University of Dayton student Sean Miller went from a helpful, casual observer to member of a team that will launch a project on space shuttle Endeavour. The 17-day mission will launched March 11.

"I heard that another student was having software problems," said Miller, who performed the work as a co-op student at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base's Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT). "I went to the lab, observed the errors he was getting and made a few suggestions. They worked, and immediately I was asked to help review all the software code.

"I looked through approximately 1,500 lines of code from noon to midnight and made multiple improvements."

Two days later, Miller headed to the Johnson Space Center in Houston to help test the Rigidizable Inflatable Get-Away-Special Experiment (RIGEX) program. RIGEX operates in the space shuttle cargo bay and is designed to test and collect data on inflated and rigid structures in space, according to NASA.

After completing testing in Houston, the team brought the experiment back to Wright-Patterson for final flight verification tests. Richard Cobb, an AFIT assistant professor of aerospace engineering, led the student team through all phases of the experiment's design and testing.

"I learned a lot about projects and running them even though I didn't run this one. I also learned a lot about working with NASA and its safety requirements for manned spaceflight," said Miller, a sophomore computer engineering technology and electronic engineering technology double major from Xenia, Ohio. "It has been very valuable in the fact that it will look really good on a resume. I think I have gained a lot of respect from professors and co-workers."

Miller was part of a team, which has involved AFIT students, summer interns, co-op students and lab support technicians during the last several years, according to Air Force officials. They've come from places such as Wright State University, the U.S. Air Force Academy, the Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology and The Ohio State University.

The RIGEX experiment is the first designed, built and qualified space flight experiment for AFIT, Air Force officials said. It will be flown under the direction of the U.S. Department of Defense's space test program.