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Longtime NASA engineer talks space exploration with Honors College freshmen

This week, students in Oakland University's Honors College freshman colloquium were treated to a visit from David McKissock, who shared experiences from his more than 30-year career as an engineer for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

McKissock, who started at NASA in 1983, talked to students about the past, present and future of space exploration, covering a range of topics, including collaborations with other countries, technological advancements, missions and objectives.

He also touched on the pivotal role that politics plays in shaping the direction of NASA.

"Being a technical organization, NASA is dominated by scientists and engineers, but it's the political process that drives NASA," McKissock explained. "You could say 'I think it's important for NASA to go to Mars, but that's a political decision, not a technical decision. We could go to Mars tomorrow if Congress would provide the money and the President would sign off on it.'"

McKissock works at the NASA Glenn Research Center in Cleveland and has devoted much of his career to working on electrical systems the International Space Station.

The "Making Discoveries" freshman colloquium is focused on the process of discovery in fields such as the arts, technology and medicine well as individual and team excellence.

With approximately 450 students, this year's freshman class marked the fifth consecutive year of record-breaking enrollment for the Honors College. To learn more about the Honors College, visit oakland.edu/hc.



NASA engineer David McKissock spoke to students in the Honors College freshman colloquium.



David McKissock (left) and Honors College Dean Graeme Harper