



May 9, 2014

## Biography – Dr. Robert Thirsk

Former Canadian astronaut Dr. Robert Thirsk (O.C., O.B.C.) was elected the 13th chancellor of the University of Calgary in May 2014.

Thirsk has deep roots in Alberta. He attended R.T. Alderman Junior High and Lord Beaverbrook High Schools and has a Bachelor of Science degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Calgary. Thirsk also has a Master of Science in mechanical engineering and a Master of Business Administration from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, along with a medical degree from McGill University. He also has numerous honorary degrees, including a Doctor of Laws from the University of Calgary, which was conferred while Thirsk was in orbit aboard the International Space Station.

Thirsk holds the Canadian record for the longest time spent in space, at 204 days, 18 hours. His first trip into space was aboard the Space Shuttle Columbia – a 17-day mission on which he and six crewmates performed 43 experiments related to life and materials sciences. In 2009, he became the first Canadian to undertake a long duration space mission when he spent 188 days aboard the International Space Station.

In addition to the research he conducted during these missions, Thirsk has both conducted and been a passionate advocate for innovation and research. He is currently the co-leader of an international team doing research on the effect of spaceflight on neuroperception, and has conducted research into the impact of weightlessness on the heart and blood vessels. He currently sits on the Partners in Research education advisory board and on the board of LIFT Philanthropy partners.

Thirsk has also worked tirelessly in the area of education: promoting space and science literacy through consulting on curriculum for young people; providing leadership mentoring through the National Outdoor Leadership School; and serving as an adjunct faculty member at the International Space University in Strasbourg, France. He is also a founder and team member of Tomatosphere – a project to engage students in space science by having them conduct experiments with tomato seeds that have been sent into space. In 2012, Thirsk participated in an innovative cross-disciplinary project called “From Blue to Red” which saw 350 students from Lord Beaverbrook High School and elsewhere write, illustrate and compose the music for a fictional e-book about a future mission to Mars. The book has become an important curricular aid in Alberta elementary schools.

In addition to his honorary doctorate from the University of Calgary, he received the distinguished alumni award in 1985. Robert Thirsk High School in Calgary is named in his honour and he is a member of the Order of British Columbia and an Officer of the Order of Canada.

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