

Exploring the Universe

Over the years, we have developed many tools to explore the universe. From unmanned probes, to manned space capsules, to space stations, to telescopes, we are constantly inventing new tools to further explore the universe. The knowledge and technological advancements we have gained, due to our exploration, has been invaluable to our society and has improved our quality of life.

All of this is not without a cost. Millions of dollars are spent annually on scientific research, space exploration, and launches. Over the years many people have felt that this exploration of space is a waste of time and money. This money could be better spent on Earth to solve our current social and economic problems.

There is no doubt about it, space exploration is expensive. However, overall, the benefits of space exploration far outweigh the costs. Technological improvements in PC, plastics, food processing, medicine, and transportation are just a few examples of how space exploration has improved the technologies we use on Earth. The challenges of space exploration push us to find solutions that can also be used here at home.

NASA and other space agencies around the world realize the expense of space exploration, and are already working on the next generation of launch vehicles. These vehicles promise to lower the cost of launches by providing a spacecraft that is completely reusable and requires very little retrofitting. Such vehicles could lower the cost to a point where almost anyone could afford to take a ride into space.

Should we continue our space exploration efforts? The promise of new knowledge and technologies and the potential of the vast resources in space suggest it would be prudent to continue current and future exploration efforts of our universe. Our leaders and politicians should continue to set goals much as President Kennedy did in the 1960s when he said:

"But why some say the moon. Why choose this as our goal? And they may well ask, why climb the highest mountain? Why thirty-five years ago, fly the Atlantic? Why does Rice play Texas? We choose to go to the moon! We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they hard. Because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills. Because that challenge is one that we're willing to accept. One we are unwilling to postpone. And one we intend to win."

Such challenging goals and undaunting determination would serve us well in the years to come. The choice of continued space exploration is up to us. We must continue to encourage our leaders and politicians to proceed with further funding for our space programs.