



Benjamin Alvin Drew Jr., a NASA astronaut and retired Air Force colonel, will address Dillard University's Pre-Freshman Engineering Program on Wednesday, June 22 at 5:30 p.m. in the Georges Auditorium of the Professional Schools Building. The Pre-Freshman Engineering Program (PREP), a four-week summer session for rising ninth and tenth grade students, is designed to increase the number of women and minorities who pursue careers in the science and engineering professions.

Drew, who was selected by NASA to be a mission specialist in 2000 and has logged more than 600 hours in space, will speak to students on the day of their white coat ceremony. The ceremony is a tradition inspired by medical schools that speaks to PREP students' dedication to the study of science and engineering.

In February and March, Drew participated in the 39th and final mission of the space shuttle Discovery. On the mission, Drew became the 200th person to walk in space, and the crew delivered Robonaut 2, the first humanlike robot in space, to the International Space Station. In 2007, Drew flew on the 20th flight of the space shuttle Endeavour.

"Astronaut Drew's presence and interaction with students can go a long way toward encouraging young men and women to excel in and complete college degrees in the sciences," said Dr. Ruby Broadway, the founder of the Pre-Freshman Engineering Program and an associate professor of biology at Dillard University. "This is an extremely rare and wonderful opportunity for our students."

Drew entered the U.S. Air Force as a second lieutenant in 1984 and earned his pilot wings the following year. His initial assignment was as a combat rescue helicopter pilot. He later transitioned to special operations, and between 1989 and 1992, he flew in more than 60 combat missions over Panama, the Persian Gulf and Northern Iraq. He later served on the Air Force's Air Combat Command staff. He has more than 3,500 hours flying experience and has piloted 30

different types of aircraft.

A native of Washington, D.C., Drew double majored in astronautical engineering and physics at the United States Air Force Academy and later earned a master's in aerospace science from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.