

Irvine cubesat 01: a teen's perspective

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Under the iridescent dusk of Southern California, where hues of orange intertwine harmonically with blazing shades of fiery red, a small group of people, about 30 or so, walk up the stairs with fervor to their steps at a mostly empty high school. They look excited, with gleams in their eyes and dreams in their heads; one can tell they want something.

They want to accomplish something, something that doesn't seem like it belongs in the minds of seemingly ordinary high school students. A few minutes later, the small group of adolescents and one adult move into what is seemingly a computer lab. Rows among rows of computers and desks, a white board, and the oddly shaped rotating chair fill the room, it is the epitome of the norm and yet even the inanimate objects look excited, as if they want to come to life, and accomplish something as well. The students take their respective seats, none are assigned, yet all are filled willingly and passionately. The F Lab- one of Woodbridge High School's many computer labs. Although some may view it as a simple and robust computer lab, I view it very differently.

I view it as the nesting ground of innovation, the womb of great ideas, and the birthplace of the future. Here, in the spacious and roomy computer lab, a team of future Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (otherwise known as STEM) students are working towards their future. They are building a nano-satellite, and in the fall of 2017, will be launching one of the first UV optical communication system based nano-satellites ever. The Irvine CubeSat Initiative, funded by Tyvak, NASA, the Ecuadorian Space Agency (EXA) and many more, was started by the founder of Tyvak, one of the two original inventors of the CubeSat, and many giants in the field. The

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program's goal is to recruit young and talented thinkers at the high school and middle school levels in the STEM field, and to build nano-satellites, ready for launch and for commercial purposes.

I sit in that uniformly colored room, every Monday and Wednesday for about two hours, with peers of exceptional talent, and think of ways to turn our lofty dream of sending our CubeSat into space. It's an intense program, according to our mentor Ms. Jennifer Blackie, both because sending a satellite into space requires meticulous thinking and careful planning, and also because it's our program's first year in the business. However, all of our encouraging and helpful mentors, from every school and company in the program, believe in us realizing that dream. Now I know what you're thinking, and skepticism is to be expected.

After all, we're just high school students, what do we know? For most of you, the mere thought of high school students working on a satellite for launch probably reminds you of a grotesque mashed together picture of 2012 and the animated Green Lantern movie, however, that isn't going to happen. (We hope!) For us, exceeding expectations and launching the CubeSat are some of the most important things on each of our minds. Search us up on Google or follow us on social media, and join us for an exciting year filled with adventures while we do our best to think outside the Cube.