



# N E W S

---

El Camino College | Public Relations & Marketing Department  
16007 Crenshaw Blvd., Torrance, CA 90506  
Contact: Ann M. Garten, Director, Community Relations  
Telephone: (310) 660-3406 | E-Mail: [agarten@elcamino.edu](mailto:agarten@elcamino.edu)

For Immediate Release

June 17, 2011

## **El Camino College Students Conduct Research; Plan to Launch “Space Balloon”**

El Camino College Research Academy students plan to send two helium weather balloons into space to collect pictures at the edge of the atmosphere. Through “Project Space Balloon 999,” the team also hopes to gain video footage and deploy a model of a train that can successfully glide out from its enclosed box.

A drop test will be conducted at El Camino College on Saturday, June 18; an official launch is scheduled for June 26 in the mountains near Riverside.

“This is a great opportunity for me and other students to learn a variety of skills,” said John Twedt, an engineering major who plans to transfer to a university in fall 2012.

“Working together as a team, leading a team, researching, interacting with companies, coming up with the best design, weighing cost versus benefit when considering components, actually finding the most suitable components, and bringing the design from theory to reality – this is the sort of research that is most valuable. This is what will prepare you for the real world.”

The students plan to have the balloon travel 30 kilometers into the atmosphere, where the air will reach temperatures of up to -48 degrees Fahrenheit. When it pops, a parachute will unfurl, bringing the payload back to earth along a specified route.

Twedt and the other students working on “Project Space Balloon 999” applied to be a part of this special program that provides an opportunity for students to test ideas, program equipment, and plan and evaluate the launch process. The program is sponsored by El Camino College’s STEM grant, and directed by ECC Natural Sciences Dean Jean Shankweiler and STEM Special Project Coordinator Josefina Bedolla.

“The whole concept of launching something into outer space seemed to be something left to those ‘Good Will Hunting’ types over at NASA, with huge budgets and decades of experience,” Twedt said. “The learning curve has been steep for all parties involved, but well worth it. Virtually everything in this project has been a learning experience for me.”

###