

Nano steps

If \$25,000 and a commitment for two or more months in space is too steep a price for a student experiment on the International Space Station, how about a ride for less than \$10,000 for two weeks on the space shuttle? That is the approach taken by American Aerospace Advisers, which agreed Mar. 5 to rent a "2U"—the equivalent of half a NanoRack—on STS-133, the last scheduled shuttle mission. Although they will be restricted to vial-sized experiments, CEO David Yeol says his approach should be enough to handle experiments in many microgravity-science fields, such as protein crystal growth, collagen polymerization and thin film membrane casting. Full NanoRack experiments may weigh

up to a kilogram (2.2 lb.) and remain on the ISS for as long as four months. But they also will cost commercial users \$50,000, or half that for students (*AW&ST* Mar. 8, p. 37). American Aerospace's clients will be restricted to mere ounces and experiments will remain in a middeck locker on the shuttle Discovery during the mission. But NanoRacks founder Jeff Manber says this is a good way to establish a baseline for a deeper involvement on the ISS later. Yeol says about 20% of the 120 spaces American Aerospace is offering have been sold. Applications for the rest will close in June. Details on the commercial program are available at www.American-Aerospace.net.

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