What is Western Aerospace Scholars (WAS)?
A two-part program for high school juniors focused on topics related to the history and future exploration of space by NASA and topics in Earth and Space Science. Phase One is a five-month distance learning course designed in partnership with NASA and the University of Washington, which provides students the opportunity to earn five college credits. Phase Two is a six-day residency experience based at The Montana Learning Center in Helena, Montana.

Who is eligible?
Montana state resident and be a current junior in high school.

Acceptance into the online course is based on a completed application and student interest. We value diverse voices and ideas and believe in the importance of bringing multiple perspectives to our discussion of topics related to human space exploration.

There are no math or science requirements for participation, but pre-algebra and essay writing coursework will be helpful. There will be academic support provided during the online course and students are able (and encouraged) to reach out their current high school teachers for help.

What’s the difference between Phase One and Phase Two?
Phase One (online course offered by University of Washington) is a four-month online course designed by NASA and the University of Washington (UW) consisting of seven online lessons and a final project. The curriculum focuses on the history of NASA and the space environment around the Earth, including its control by solar activity and the potential opportunities for human exploration of the solar system. Students can apply to receive five UW credits in Earth & Space Science for their work in Phase One.

Phase Two (Helena Summer Residency at The Montana Learning Center) The work during Phase One is what qualifies students for the Summer Residency. During this six-day experience, students will get an exclusive inside look at the aerospace industry in Montana through behind-the-scenes aerospace company tours, STEM expert presentations, and the opportunity to network informally with STEM professionals. Summer Residency participants also get the opportunity to connect with like-minded peers from across the state and participate in engineering challenges, museum tours and team building activities.

Health and safety are our first priorities and will only hold in-person residencies if we are confident that it will be safe to do so. If we are not able to host an in-person residency, we will host a virtual experience during the same week as well as invite students to an in-person event at some point during their senior year. We will give frequent updates of the status on the Summer Residencies.

When can I apply?
Applications will be open from September 1 through October 30, 2021.
When does Phase One begin?
Enrolled students will be able to access the Phase One website starting Thursday, October 14, 2021. The programming officially begins with a short introductory activity that will need to be completed by Tuesday, November 2, 2021. The first full lesson is not due until Tuesday, November 16, 2021 and the final course activity will be due on March 1, 2022.

Will I get a grade on my high school transcript? Can I earn college credit and will it transfer?
Your performance on the WAS curriculum will not be shared with your high school or be reflected on your high school transcript. If you decide to leave the course early or do not successfully complete the course your final grade will not be shared with anyone.

Students can elect to earn five University of Washington credits in ESS102: Space and Space Travel, based on their successful completion of the WAS online curriculum. This course meets the natural science requirement for graduation from the University of Washington and therefore is highly transferable, but we recommend that students contact universities they are interested in applying to in order to confirm that this is the case. Students do not have to decide if they want to take the course for UW credit until they have completed several lessons and the content remains the same regardless if a student takes the course for credit or not. Students will also have the ability to withdraw from the course if they do not wish to receive a UW transcript and grade for their work.

How many online lessons are there?
There are seven lessons and a final project to complete and they are due every two weeks.

When do I complete the lessons?
Since the lessons are online, students can complete them at their own pace. When a lesson opens students have access to all the activities for that lesson and can set their own schedule for completion. Some students like working a little each night, where others prefer completing over the weekend, the key to success is finding a schedule that works for you and helps you to complete all activities by the lesson deadline on Tuesday at 11:55pm. Students will be provided a detailed schedule of deadlines and activity requirements at the start of the course. Lessons materials are made available every two weeks from October to March.

Who evaluates my online work? How do I get help if I need it?
Certified teachers currently teaching in STEM areas evaluate all Phase One work and each student is assigned to one specific Online Academic Evaluator (OAE) throughout the online course. Each activity has a grading rubric that outlines how students will be evaluated and OAEs will provide detailed feedback to help students improve. Students are able to ask for help from their OAE, teachers in their current school and from WAS program leads during weekly virtual office hours. We also have a virtual reference librarian who will provide help on online researching and essay writing.

What kind of work is required?
Each lesson consists of:

- Reading chapters and quiz (about 20-25 pages of online material)
- 500-word essay (based on a topic related to the reading material)
- Space-related math problem (word problems with some algebraic thinking)
- Some lessons will also contain:
  » online forums
  » virtual lab activities
  » graphic design activities
How long will each Phase One activity take?
Phase One is the equivalent of taking a five credit college course, therefore students will need to be able to commit to spending **15-20 hours** over the course of two weeks to complete each lesson. Students find that creating a weekly schedule helps them to manage the online course work in addition to their other commitments.

What if I miss a deadline?
WAS understands that there are a multitude of things that can prevent students from meeting lesson deadlines, so we allow students to turn in activities late and students always receive some credit for submitting work. Having a few late activities isn’t going to prevent you from having success in the course.

How many students apply each year? How many make it to the Summer Residency?
We average 40 Montana students in Phase One and we have room for up to 24 students in the Summer Residency.

How are students selected for the Summer Residency?
Students are notified in mid-March if they are selected for the Summer Residency based on their successful completion of all Phase One material and final score on the Phase One lessons. The typical student who qualifies for Phase Two is someone who has completed all of their online activities and been consistent in submitting quality work.

When does the Summer Residency take place?
If we deem it safe to do so, there will be one residency offered at The Montana Learning Center in the summer of 2022. In February of 2022 we will provide guidance on the current plan for the Summer Residency. The residency runs Sunday afternoon through Friday afternoon and the proposed 2022 date will be determined by the time the application opens in September 2021.

What are the benefits of being a WAS alumni?
After completing the Summer Residency, students are enrolled into an exclusive alumni network; giving access to select scholarships. The benefit of joining our alumni network has proven to be favorable, WAS alumni are attending top-tier colleges and universities across the country, providing insight about potential universities and degree programs. Many of our 1700 student alumni are currently working at leading aerospace and STEM companies around the world. If enhancing your network and improving your professional opportunities is appealing, you will enjoy the financial and intangible benefits of WAS.

What is the cost to participate?
There is no cost to participate in Phase One of Western Aerospace Scholars! If a student wants to receive an official transcript with UW credits for their work in Phase One they can register through the UW after completing several lessons. The cost to receive credit is approximately $235, **but students can apply for tuition assistance to cover up to 100% of this cost.** We will supply all of the information on registering after the course as begun.

Should a student qualify for Phase Two, the tuition is $750. This is not due until April of 2022, and there is also **tuition assistance available that can cover between 50-100% of the cost.** Summer Residency tuition covers accommodations, meals and all supplies for the six-day residency. Students are expected to transport themselves to/from Helena for the residency, but if a student needs transportation support the WAS program can provide assistance.
Who can apply for tuition assistance?
There is no cost to participate in Phase One, but any student who thinks for whom the cost of Phase One UW Credit or Phase Two Tuition would be a financial burden on their family can apply for tuition assistance. On average, 40% of participants received some amount of tuition assistance. Tuition assistance forms will be made available after the program begins as there is no cost to participate in Phase One.

Students who currently qualify for free and reduced lunch automatically qualify for 100% tuition assistance for both Phase One and Phase Two.

How do I apply for tuition assistance?
Tuition assistance forms will be made available after the program begins.

Still have questions?
Please call program director Melissa Edwards at 206.764.5866 or email MEdwards@museumofflight.org