

Col. Michael Edward Fossum '80, USAFR (Ret.)



Chief Operating Officer, Texas A&M University at Galveston
Vice President, Texas A&M University
Superintendent, Texas A&M Maritime Academy
Executive Professor of Maritime Administration, Texas A&M University at Galveston

Michael E. Fossum '80 currently serves as a Vice President of Texas A&M University, the Chief Operating Officer of the Galveston Campus, and the Superintendent of the Texas A&M Maritime Academy. Fossum joined Texas A&M following his retirement from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) – Johnson Space Center in 2017.

Fossum is a veteran of three space flights and has logged more than 194 days in space, including more than 48 hours in seven spacewalks during his 19 years as an astronaut! During his last mission in 2011, Fossum served as the Commander of the International Space Station. He has logged over 2,000 hours in 35 different aircraft throughout the course of his career. Fossum earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering from Texas A&M University and was commissioned as an officer in the U.S. Air Force in 1980. He is also a graduate of the US Air Force Test Pilot School and has earned Master of Science degrees in Systems Engineering and Physical Science/Space Science.

Fossum was born in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and grew up in McAllen, Texas. He is married to his Aggie sweetheart, the former Melanie J. London '80. They have four children and eight grandchildren. He enjoys family and outdoor activities, motorcycle riding and backpacking. Fossum has been a lifelong supporter and volunteer in the Scouting program.

Experience:

Fossum received his commission in the U.S. Air Force from Texas A&M University in May 1980. After completing his graduate work at the Air Force Institute of Technology in 1981, he was detailed to NASA Johnson Space Center, where he supported space shuttle flight operations, beginning with STS-3. He was selected for Air Force Test Pilot School at Edwards Air Force Base, California, where he graduated in 1985. After graduation, Fossum served at Edwards Air Force Base as a Flight Test Engineer in the F-16 Test Squadron, working on a variety of airframe, avionics and armament development programs. From 1989 to 1992, he served as a Flight Test Manager at Detachment 3, Air Force Flight Test Center. Fossum resigned from active duty in 1992 to work for NASA and retired as a Colonel from the U.S. Air Force Reserves in 2010. He has logged more than 1,800 hours in 35 different aircraft.

Awards/Honors:

NASA Exceptional Service Medal and two NASA Spaceflight Medals. Scouting awards include Distinguished Eagle Scout, Silver Beaver and Vigil Member of the Order of the Arrow. Distinguished Military Graduate from Texas A&M University and Squadron Commander in the Corps of Cadets. Awarded the U.S. Air Force Meritorious Service Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters and various other service awards. Distinguished Graduate from the U.S. Air Force Test Pilot School, Class 85A.

About Me

Earning my undergraduate degree in engineering from Texas A&M University in 1980, I never – in my wildest dreams - could have imagined having the honor of leading such a distinguished campus of the university I love!

Though I grew up in McAllen, in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas, and a long ways from A&M, I knew I was going to be an Aggie the first time I visited the campus. Following graduation in 1980, I was commissioned into the United States Air Force, married my Aggie sweetheart, and immediately entered graduate school earning a master's degree in engineering. I later graduated from the U.S. Air Force Test Pilot School and enjoyed the challenge of helping develop and integrate cutting-edge technology into the most modern military aircraft at that time. Twelve years of Active Duty later, I stepped forward into a civilian career at NASA's Johnson Space Center, while simultaneously continuing my military service in the Reserves.

A dream I had pursued since the early days of our nation's space program was realized in 1998 when I was selected as a NASA Astronaut. I was incredibly fortunate to have flown on three space missions in 2006, 2008, and 2011. During the first two missions, I had the

opportunity to build and repair the International Space Station (ISS) as a spacewalker. As a crewmember on a Russian Soyuz spacecraft in 2011, I traveled to the International Space Station once again. During that 6-month mission, I served as the Commander of the Space Station overseeing the completion of a research mission. Over the course of the three missions, I spent 194 days in space and conducted seven spacewalks for a total of 48 hours working outside the spacecraft. In the years after my last mission to space, I served in various senior leadership roles at NASA and enjoyed working with rookie crewmembers helping them prepare for the next successful mission, as well as working with the team in Mission Control addressing and solving the challenges which inevitably arise.

To say that I enjoyed my career as an Astronaut is an understatement. I never thought I would leave NASA. However, a yearning to seek out another mission where I could make an even bigger, longer-lasting impact slowly grew. As a proud Aggie, I was intrigued when I learned there was a search for a new leader for the Galveston Campus of Texas A&M just a short distance down the road. I had been blessed to follow and achieve my dream of flying in space. Could my new mission be in a place where I might inspire and enable others to achieve their dreams?

The Internet answered many of my questions, but it was during my multiple visits to campus where I learned so much through conversations with students, staff, and faculty, and wandering around the buildings and laboratories. What I discovered is a treasure: a small campus proud of its Aggie traditions and values, powerful programs and small classrooms with an emphasis on student success, and exciting research programs having incredible impacts on our state, our nation, and the world.