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Guests unveil the plaque for the School of Space Exploration at the University of Chinese Academy of Sciences on Tuesday in Beijing. **zou SHUO / CHINA DAILY**

School launched for interstellar travel

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The University of Chinese Academy of Sciences unveiled its School of Space Exploration on Tuesday in Beijing, marking a key step in cultivating talent for China's endeavors in deep space exploration and space science.

The inauguration ceremony was held at the Chinese Academy of Sciences memorial hall for the "Two Bombs, One Satellite" project on the university's campus.

Zhu Junqiang, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and director of the CAS Bureau of Strategic High-tech Development, was appointed dean of the newly founded school.

The decision to establish the school was made in November 2025. It will develop a curriculum covering 14 first-level disciplines and special-

ties, including aerospace science and technology and planetary science.

Building upon 97 existing courses, the school will add 22 new core subjects such as interstellar dynamics and propulsion principles, space environment perception and utilization, planetary dynamics and habitability, and interstellar sociology and governance.

UCAS President Zhou Qi emphasized that the school's establishment responds to a new era in space exploration. "We have already stepped beyond Earth — building a space station, exploring the far side of the moon, and launching missions to Mars. It is time to think strategically about building the interstellar travel enterprise of the future," he said.

Zhou acknowledged the widespread public interest that followed the school's initial announcement, noting that its delayed inauguration reflected a desire to move beyond

"the glamour of the moment" and focus on substantial long-term planning. He paid tribute to the pioneering spirit of the "Two Bombs, One Satellite" generation, whose work in harsh conditions laid the foundation for today's achievements.

The school is designed to be inherently interdisciplinary and institutionally collaborative. Zhou highlighted that over 100 CAS research institutes are connected to its mission. "When we embark on the journey of interstellar travel, we will face every kind of scientific and practical challenge — from navigation and space weather to spacecraft engineering, space agriculture and even interstellar diplomacy. No single institution or discipline can accomplish this alone," he said.

He also stressed that the school must look beyond existing academic boundaries. "We cannot merely follow in the footsteps of others to the

moon, Mars, or beyond the solar system. We must develop our own strategic vision and build a scientific system that serves the future common needs of humanity," Zhou said.

A key focus of the school will be talent development. "We have established not just a project, but a school, and the heart of a school is nurturing people," Zhou said. He called on all participating institutes and experts to prioritize students' growth and provide them with platforms to "see farther and go farther."

Zhu, the academician, said the school is positioned to support the country's long-term interstellar navigation development, serving as an innovation source and talent training base.

"Interstellar navigation is a complex, systematic engineering task. Breakthroughs in a single discipline cannot support the overall progress of the endeavor," Zhu noted. The school integrates aerospace engineering, physics, chemistry, biology and materials science around the grand goal of interstellar travel.

Chengdu firm sets up large computing model in space

GUANGZHOU — A Chinese commercial aerospace firm has successfully deployed a general-purpose artificial intelligence model aboard its orbiting satellite, marking a major milestone for space-based computing.

GuoXing Aerospace Technology announced at a seminar on Monday that it has unveiled Alibaba's Qwen3 large language model onto its inaugural space-based computing center, enabling end-to-end reasoning tasks entirely in orbit. "This marks the world's first deployment of a general-purpose large-scale AI model from ground control to an operational satellite constellation in orbit," said Wang Yabo, executive vice-president of the startup based in Chengdu, Sichuan province.

In May 2025, China launched a new constellation of 12 space computing satellites into orbit, the first cluster of GuoXing Aerospace's space computing project.

In the trial, the Qwen3 model completed multiple experiments, with questions transmitted from Earth to the satellite, processed on board, and results returned to ground stations — all within two minutes.

As AI fuels an insatiable appetite for computing power, a new field is emerging in the technological race as intelligent computing capabilities are pushed into space. In November, a SpaceX rocket orbited the Starcloud-1 satellite mounted with Nvidia GPUs.

Wang outlined the firm's ambitions to build a sprawling network of 2,800 specialized computing satellites by 2035.

The planned constellation includes 2,400 inference satellites and 400 training satellites, deployed across sun-synchronous, dawn-dusk and low-inclination orbits at altitudes of 500 to 1,000 kilometers.

The constellation is designed to employ laser inter-satellite links to facilitate high-speed data transfer, aiming to deliver 100,000 petaflops of inference compute and 1 million petaflops of training compute worldwide.

Its second and third satellite clusters are expected to be deployed this year, with a 1,000-satellite network completed by 2030, according to Wang.

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