

My name is Natasha Sushenko, and I'm a graduate student in biological sciences with an emphasis in microbiology at the School of Life Sciences at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, doing research in the Environmental Microbiology Lab at the Desert Research Institute under the guidance of Dr. Duane Moser. I am currently a MS student, but I have always wanted to pursue my PhD and intend to change my degree track.

I have always dreamed of being a research scientist—my early childhood dream was to be a scientist at NASA. Now, I can combine my love of microbiology with my fascination with space through my research project that is being funded by the NV Space Grant. In this work, I will study strains of an opportunistic pathogen that were isolated from surfaces on the International Space Station. I will grow these strains under simulated microgravity in the lab, combined with exposure to common disinfectants used on the space station, to see how these stresses lead to bacteria becoming both more virulent and more antibiotic-resistant.