DR. ROBERT FERL
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR AND DIRECTOR OF ICBR

Rob is a Distinguished Professor the Director of the Interdisciplinary Center for Biotechnology Research. His experimental heritage is the study of plant gene expression in response to environmental change, and recently that environment has been spaceflight and extraterrestrial habitats. Rob Co-Chairs the Committee on Biological and Physical Sciences in Space for the National Academies of Science and is a past president of the American Society for Gravitational and Space Research. Among his honors are the 2016 NASA Medal of Honor for Exceptional Scientific Achievement and the 2016 AIAA Jeffries Aerospace Medicine and Life Sciences Research Award. While a dedicated lab geek, he enjoys and advocates for the field experiential side of science – he and his lab have flown with their experiments on many parabolic flight and other research aircraft to study aspects of the microgravity environment and develop flight hardware for understanding biological effects of spaceflight. Rob also conducts ground based science on space-related environmental effects on terrestrial biology and works within planetary exploration analogs including the Haughton Mars Project in the Arctic and in Antarctic venues.

He has designed and flown several spaceflight experiments and conducted numerous experiments in spaceflight and planetary analog environments studying the effects of spaceflight and planetary habitats on plant molecular biology. His lab has had experiments on multiple Space Shuttle missions and International Space Station segments including recent launches and recoveries on with NASA and CASIS that emphasize cross and multi discipline approaches to

space research. He is currently in the preparation stages for ISS experiments next year and technology development for suborbital research flights. His lab has also flown with their experiments on several parabolic flight and other research aircraft to mimic aspects of the microgravity environment and develop flight hardware for understanding biological effects of space vehicles and space flights. Ferl also conducts ground based science on space-related environmental effects on terrestrial biology and works within planetary exploration analogs including the Haughton Mars Project in the Arctic. He has published extensively on the subject of spaceflight biology and extraterrestrial plant growth - and on the fundamentals of moving life off the surface of the earth.