

Speaker: Dr. Amy Williams, University of Florida

***The Search for Life on Mars: Challenges and Opportunities in
Current and Future Mars Exploration***

Friday, February 14, 2025, 1:30 pm, PSB 160/161

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Abstract: The exploration of Mars has taken us from ‘Follow the Water’ with the Spirit and Opportunity rovers, to ‘Follow the Carbon’ with the Curiosity rover. We now accept the challenge to ‘Follow the Life’ with the grand search for ancient life on Mars through the Perseverance rover mission and the Mars Sample Return program. This presentation will explore the foundational discoveries and ongoing exploration of Mars with NASA’s Curiosity and Perseverance rovers and discuss what’s next in humankind’s exploration of Mars.



BIO: Dr. Amy Williams is an associate professor in the Geological Sciences department at the University of Florida. She is an astrobiologist and geobiologist, and her research interests include the formation and preservation of physical and molecular biosignatures in terrestrial environments as an analog for putative biosignature formation on Mars. She has been a member of the NASA Curiosity rover science team since 2009, and currently works with the Sample Analysis at Mars (SAM) instrument team as a Participating Scientist to explore the distribution of organic molecules on Mars’ surface. She is also a Participating Scientist on NASA’s Perseverance rover mission, which is collecting samples that can one day be returned to Earth. She has received several NASA group achievement awards and in 2022 received the Provost’s Excellence Award for Assistant Professors. She has served on several NASA advisory committees and working groups that set the priorities for planetary exploration, including the 2023 Planetary Science and Astrobiology Decadal Survey and the Search for Life Science Analysis Group. She also works toward increasing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the geosciences and STEM.