

Participatory Exploration for Inspiration and Education (12)  
Educating the Next Generation (2)

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WANT OUR FUTURE INITIATIVE TO AN INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCE**Abstract**

The We Want Our Future initiative is a student led project aimed to inspire the next generation to dream about space exploration. The program highlights the importance of technology to explorers of the past and encourages students to follow a similar path by pursuing technical fields of study. Founded on the premise that students are universally excited about exploration, the initiative seeks to correlate science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) with these universally inspirational activities. Building on this association, the We Want Our Future initiative (WEOF) challenges participants to envision the future possibilities of exploration. These visions, made possible through STEM, are then illustrated in the context of creating a “postcard” from the future. As with any postcard, participants are then able to provide a message on the reverse side of their image. In an effort to counteract a dearth of appreciation for ongoing and future exploration efforts, WEOF excites participants by informing them of ongoing advances that STEM has enabled. The future of space exploration is fundamentally and inextricably an international endeavour. Thus the appreciation for STEM disciplines and the future they enable must be global in scope and cooperative in nature.

While the initiative originally focused on the United States, early efforts broadened the accessibility to additional languages of Spanish, French and Dutch. As a result of these early successes, the WEOF initiative was invited to discuss the project at the 2011 International Astronautical Congress in Cape Town, South Africa. This presentation was the culmination of early efforts to increase international exposure, and has thus re-invigorated this drive for globalization of these goals. Working with international partners, efforts are underway to expand to further languages including: Italian, Egyptian, and Chinese. To date, the initiative has received thousands of postcards within the United States and across the world including Europe, Asia, South America, and Africa. With an increased focus on international participation, the WEOF initiative hopes to establish a more permanent source of inspiration to students interested in space exploration.