

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Lift-Off - Secondary Space Education (2)

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INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN FEMALE STUDENTS DECISION TO SELECT ACADEMY/ACADEMIC
FOCUS: AN INTERNATIONAL COMPARATIVE STUDY.**Abstract**

Science, Technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) are broadly viewed as important to the national economy. Interest about America's capacity to be competitive in the global economy has prompted a number of calls to take action to reinforce the pipeline into these fields (National Academy of Sciences, Committee on Science, Engineering and Public Policy, 2007; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2006; U.S. Bureau of Education, 2006 Hill, C., Corbett, C., St. Rose, A., American Association of University, W. (2010). This also true in Ghana. In 1957, "Ghana nursed the dream of rapid social and economic development using knowledge and tools derived from Science and Technology" (Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology, 2010). To strengthen or reinforce the pipeline into these fields, it is imperative to strengthen the number of female representatives in STEM programs. As many females drops out of STEM programs and also avoid pursuing STEM programs and degrees in high school and college respectively, there is a need to inquire why there a few or no role models and influential people in the lives of these female students in middle and high schools. This paper will build on a previous exploratory study on the influences and motivators of students when selecting a STEM academic program in secondary education. The study focuses on identifying influential people on 9th and 8th female students in Ghana and the United States when selecting their academic program. Preliminary findings show that a greater percentage of Ghanaian female students report having a role model in comparison with United States female students who report not having a role model at all.