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SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Enabling the Future - Developing the Space Workforce (5)

Author: Dr. Kimberley Clayfield
South Australian Space School, Australia

Dr. Olivia Samardzic
South Australian Space School, Australia
Mr. Mike Roach
South Australian Space School, Australia

20 YEARS OF SPACE SCHOOL: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF AN EXTRACURRICULAR SPACE EDUCATION PROGRAM ON AUSTRALIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' STUDY AND CAREER CHOICES

Abstract

The South Australian Space School (SASS) is an extracurricular residential 3-day program for South Australian secondary school students in Year 10. It has been held annually since 1997. The program is operated on a volunteer basis by a team of secondary school teachers and STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine) professionals. In 2004 the Space School team also established the 4-day National Space Camp program for Year 11 students.

The Space School programs aim to provide a stimulating and rewarding educational experience for secondary school students to focus them on a career in STEMM by using space as an exciting application. Activities are run to give the students contextual information about space sciences but also provide enough examples and career information to highlight the benefits of choosing a STEMM career. Students are selected to attend Space School based on a written application and a recommendation from their school.

Space School activities typically include: guest lectures by space professionals to demonstrate the exciting range of real-world activities and careers relating to space, particularly in Australia but also internationally; an astronaut visit and personal interaction with students; hands-on activities such as physics experiments, building and launching model rockets, and contextual sciences exercises; site visits including Government research facilities and university laboratories; and information talks about university courses and STEMM careers.

In February 2017 an online survey was undertaken of Space School graduates from 1997 to 2016 to evaluate whether attending Space School influenced graduates' subsequent school subject choices and/or university study and career choices. The survey also assessed which aspects of the Space School programs students found most influential. This paper provides an overview of the survey results, which demonstrate a significant empirical causality between Space School participation and future study and career.