

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Interactive Presentations - IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (IP)

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SOCIETY OF WOMEN IN SPACE EXPLORATION AT CONCORDIA: STRATEGIES EMPLOYED
TO INCREASE INVOLVEMENT AND INTEREST IN MULTIDISCIPLINARY FIELDS OF SPACE
EXPLORATION FOR UNIVERSITY-LEVEL WOMEN

Abstract

When any new industry experiences unprecedented growth, there comes the chance to ensure a more diverse, equitable and inclusive future within that field. As the space exploration industry continues to expand, it is important to continue outreach to include women and minority groups in space exploration, starting with university-level women in multidisciplinary majors. The Society of Women in Space Exploration (SWISE) is a student-run organization that promotes gender parity, diversity, and inclusion in the field of space exploration. SWISE can now count multiple university-level chapters across North and Central America, Australia, and India. The Concordia University chapter is the first chapter inaugurated in Canada two years ago by a group of space-enthusiastic university students with the vision to inspire young women and minorities to get involved in the space industry and academia. SWISE Concordia puts emphasis on the multidisciplinary aspect of its mission and wishes to put forward that space exploration goes beyond STEM fields as it also covers the areas of space law and art. During the last year, the group has successfully hosted panels with multifaceted professional women in the space industry and academia, the last one being in collaboration with the Society for Canadian Women in Science and Technology (SCWIST). With more than a dozen Concordia University student attendees, the panelists had open discussions on the challenges related to women in project management, engineering, and space law, and shared their respective professional journeys navigating the space field. Current activities at SWISE Concordia are the planning of an astrophotography workshop and accompanying space art and photography exhibition accessible to all of the Concordia University student community. The group also takes to heart its social media platforms and creates educational, women-inspired space related content which allows a continued interaction with its international supporters. This presentation aims to showcase the strategies implemented at SWISE Concordia to increase such space-focused involvement and interest in university women by presenting the multiple professional and personal-development events organized as well as the established social media presence.