

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
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Author: Mr. Bram de Winter
Space Generation Advisory Council (SGAC), United Kingdom

Mrs. Isi Casas del Valle Pacheco
Space Generation Advisory Council (SGAC), Chile

BRIDGING THE GAP: INVESTIGATING THE FACTORS AFFECTING YOUNG SCIENTISTS'
ENGAGEMENT IN SPACE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Abstract

The space community, particularly organizations like the Space Generation Advisory Council (SGAC) and International Astronautical Federation (IAF), plays a vital role in fostering collaboration, networking and professional development. These unique multidisciplinary and multinational organizations create an environment where international and discipline overachieving collaboration is educated and tested. In particular, the multidisciplinary nature of subsections within the space sector (e.g. Space Exploration and Earth Observation) relies on the connection between engineers and scientists. While their working method significantly differs from another, intense collaboration is needed to maximize the effects of their efforts. However, in large international space organizations, there is a noticeable gap in the involvement of young scientists, hindering the diversity and dynamism of these organizations and the broader impact of inspiring the next generation of engineers and scientists. Commonly, young scientists, either still in undergraduate or postgraduate degrees, tend to connect within planetary science organizations and their respective events/conferences. This research explores the factors influencing the limited participation of young scientists in space community organizations, specifically focusing on organizations like the SGAC and IAF. The objective is to understand the underlying reasons behind the relatively low involvement of young scientists in these organizations and propose strategies for SGAC and IAF to enhance their engagement. We aim to compare data from different regions to tailor recommendations for different demographics regions worldwide. The study involves a comprehensive analysis, combining surveys, interviews, and data analytics to gather insights into the challenges faced by young scientists in joining and actively participating in space-related communities. Specific objectives include analyzing demographic trends, assessing awareness levels, evaluating perceived benefits and barriers, and proposing recommendations for increasing involvement. The presentation will conclude with lessons learned, best practices, and actionable recommendations for enhancing young scientists' involvement in space community organizations, contributing to the overall vitality and inclusivity of the space community. This work is supported by the Planetary Science Initiative from the Space Exploration Project Group under the auspices of the Space Generation Advisory Council (SGAC).