

“Why are academically prepared girls not considering or enrolling in engineering degree programs?”

We know the issue is not one of ability or preparation. We know that girls are taking high school science and math courses at approximately the same rate as boys. The problem is one of perception.

Girls and the people who influence them—teachers, school counselors, parents, peers, and the media—do not understand what a career in engineering looks like and therefore don’t consider it as a career option.

High school girls believe engineering is for people who love both math and science. They do not have an understanding of what engineering is. They do not show an interest in the field nor do they think it is “for them.” The common understanding among all audiences is that engineering is perceived to be a man’s profession and there is little to no encouragement for girls to consider engineering.

Professional interests for high school girls hinge upon **relevance**. Relevance incorporates that a job is rewarding, and it suggests that the profession is for someone “like me.” Girls want their job to be enjoyable, have a good working environment, make a difference, offer a good salary, and be flexible.

Girls and their career influencers need to be educated in what an engineer really does and how they live their lives. When a high school girl asks “what does an engineer do” the answer should not be the typical task oriented answer suitable for investment bankers and personnel recruiters. It should be an example of a real person living their daily life, with an accent on why this job is relevant to them and to the larger community.