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# O39 - KS-AIC 2025: A Student-Led Astronomy Academic Conference for Developing Young Researchers and Astronomy Communication Leaders in Rural Thailand.

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Astronomy education in schools should not be limited to the transmission of content in the classroom. It should provide students with opportunities to ask scientific questions, construct knowledge, present their work, receive academic feedback, and communicate astronomy to others in meaningful ways. This abstract presents KS-AIC 2025: K.S. Astronomical Innovation Conference – Student Academic Conference 2025, a school-based student astronomy academic conference developed at Khuruprachasan School, Chainat, Thailand. The conference was co-designed and implemented by teacher advisors, student leaders, and network schools, with the aim of transforming students from "knowledge receivers" into "knowledge creators" and developing them as young researchers, science communicators, and astronomy activity leaders in a rural school context.

From the perspective of student co-founders and student organizers, KS-AIC 2025 was not merely a competition or a project presentation platform. Rather, it functioned as a participatory learning space in which students played active roles in developing the activity concept, preparing research projects, coordinating the event, organizing exhibitions, presenting oral and poster sessions, facilitating learning stations, communicating with participants, and sharing astronomy knowledge with peers and students from network schools. Through this process, students learned to see themselves not only as learners, but also as creators, communicators, collaborators, and contributors to the scientific learning community.

KS-AIC 2025 consisted of prior project selection, Oral Presentation and Poster Presentation sessions, academic feedback from expert committees, astronomy workshops and games, planetarium-based learning, Stellarium activities, and real-sky observations using naked-eye observation and telescopes. The activities were supported by network schools, guest speakers, astronomical equipment, and astronomy education partners. The program was designed to connect academic learning with authentic scientific experiences and to make astronomy learning accessible, engaging, and meaningful for students at different levels.

The implementation resulted in 53 selected student teams, including 25 oral presentation teams and 28 poster presentation teams, with more than 400 participants from Khuruprachasan School and seven network schools. In addition, student projects and student leaders from KS-AIC were further extended into six volunteer astronomy camps for primary network schools, reaching at least 1,090 participants. These outcomes demonstrate that a student academic conference can serve as an effective mechanism for expanding astronomy learning from secondary schools to primary schools and broader educational communities.

The results indicate that KS-AIC 2025 promoted students' analytical thinking, scientific inquiry, academic communication, innovation, leadership, teamwork, and public-mindedness. It also strengthened students' confidence in asking scientific questions, explaining scientific information, receiving expert feedback, and communicating astronomy to learners and the public in meaningful ways. The activity demonstrates the potential of student-centered astronomy education and shows that rural schools can develop systematic, meaningful, and scalable academic platforms.

KS-AIC 2025 therefore serves as a model of a student-led astronomy academic conference that not only develops students as young researchers, but also fosters a culture of learning, knowledge sharing, and astronomy communication for society. The model aligns with international goals in astronomy education by promoting student participation, equitable access to astronomy learning, and youth leadership in public science communication.

**Keywords:** student academic conference, astronomy education, young researchers, science communication, student leadership, rural school, participatory learning

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