

WM2009 Conference Panel Report

Panel Session 34: Graduating Students and New Engineers - Wants and Needs - Are Companies Even Listening?

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During this session students were given a strong voice in this panel discussion telling the Department of Energy, education professionals and business what they need, how they need to get information, and their expectations when entering the workplace. Also, DOE representative described an aging workforce at DOE and the steps that DOE is taking in recruiting the best and brightest.

The Panelists included:

- Collin Donohoue, a doctoral student at Colorado School of Mines
- Denisse Aranda, a DOE Fellow and a Sr. Mechanical Engineering student at Florida International University
- Desi Crouther, Acting Director of DOE-EM's Human Capital office
- John Posten, Professor at Texas A&M University.

Collin Donohoue, a doctoral student at Colorado School of Mines, commented that industries are selling the nuclear renaissance and students are buying it, but he pointed out that there is a big disconnect because industries aren't making clear their needs and expectations and they do not give students a clear picture of the working environment.

Denisse Aranda, DOE Fellow, commented on poor web sites that are difficult to navigate and provide little information to students when looking for information on prospective companies when looking for employment. She said, "our generation knows how to use the internet and we get frustrated when companies and government web sites are not well designed." She also said that government and private industry should try to minimize bureaucracy since it is very frustrating to the new generation that has grown accustomed to instant access to information.

Desi Crouther, DOE-EM, acting Director for Human Capital, talked about DOE challenges in finding qualified talents to replace an aging workforce at DOE. Mr. Crouther said that DOE has taken a number of steps to bridge the gaps, through establishment of mentoring programs, development of rotational assignments, and use of multiple recruitment initiatives to attract the best and brightest.

John Posten, Professor Texas A&M University, described that there is a huge disconnect between students and advisor when it comes to the new nuclear renaissance. Advisors think that nuclear industry is dead, but students know better and deserve better guidance. He pointed out that in Texas alone there are plans to build 8 new nuclear reactors. He also mentioned that Texas is taking steps toward meeting the growing demand for talented professionals in the nuclear industry.