

## WM2012 Conference Panel Report

### **PANEL SESSION 44: Graduating Students and New Engineers – Wants and Needs – Are Companies Even Listening**

**Co-Chairs:** Robert Berry, *Foxtire Scientific, Inc.*  
Leonel E. Lagos, *Applied Research Center at Florida International University*

**Panel Reporter:** Leonel E. Lagos, *Applied Research Center at Florida International University*

#### **Panelists:**

1. Desi Crouther, *Director, US DOE-EM Office of Human Capital*
2. Susan Salter, *US NRC*
3. Heidi Henderson, *DOE Fellow, Applied Research Center at Florida International University*

More than 30 people attended this session that focused on an open dialog between graduating students and industry/government leaders. The purpose of the panel is to bring these two groups together so that they can share their perspective on job opportunities for young engineers and the workplace environment. The panel concluded with vivid discussions between the panel members, the audience, and session co-chairs with each side offering their perspective on challenges facing the new generation of scientists and engineers.

At this year's Waste Management Symposia (WM 2012), students, young professionals, government and industry had the opportunities to share their views and exchange ideas and concerns about employment opportunities for students and young professionals. This panel session entitled "Graduating Students and New Engineers – Wants and Needs – Are Companies Even Listening" provided a great opportunity for our young colleagues to understand the future waste management employment landscape and the challenges that a mature workforce this industry.

The panel member included representative from two federal agencies (DOE and NRC) and one student representing college students.

#### **Mr. Desi Crouther** (DOE-EM's Human Capital Office)

In his presentation, Mr. Crouther explained the type of challenges facing DOE-EM organization including an aging workforce, the continued growth of EM's mission work, and the timeframe to accomplish the environmental restoration mission.

Mr. Crouther also explained the various new internships and career opportunities for students and young engineers at DOE-EM. His office is addressing these challenges through the Office of Personnel Management Pathways Program that was initiated to recruit and retain EM employees. Mr. Crouther described federal programs such as the Interns Program, Recent Graduate Program, and the Presidential Management Fellows Program that will be available to students in a near future.

## WM2012 Conference Panel Report

### **Ms. Susan Salter** (Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Outreach and Recruitment Office)

During her presentation, Ms. Salter explained the various NRC's programs available for young professionals and NRC's employee advancement and training programs. She also provided the audience with results of a NRC surveys conducted among US universities to gauge the "Wants and Needs" of college students. Not surprisingly, a flexible work schedule, family time, challenging work, and good salaries were among the top priorities for college students. On the other hand, "students are also more attracted to companies that care about the environment," Ms. Salter also reported.

Ms. Salter also reported that the average age of NRC employees is 49 year old which is a little lower than average age at DOE, reported by Mr. Crouther to be 51 years old. Nevertheless, NRC is also facing an "aging workforce" issue that the agency is addressing by developing program to attract college student and young professionals.

### **Ms. Heidi Henderson** (DOE Fellow at Florida International University)

Ms. Henderson provided the audience with the student's perspective on the type of job environments desired by "Generation Y." During her presentation, Ms. Henderson reported the type of challenging career and opportunities that college students are looking for. She also reported on the type of work environment student are attracted to and how social media plays an important role in today's work place. She also gave examples of how Generation Y is using social media in their daily routines and how it is implemented at the workplace.

###