

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

**Co-Chairs:** **Robert Berry**, *Foxfire Scientific, Inc (United Kingdom)*  
**Leonel Lagos**, *Florida International University (FIU)*

**Panel Reporter:** **Leonel Lagos**, *FIU*

**Panelists:**

- **Melody Bell**, *Acting DAS, Office of Human Capital and Corporate Services US DOE*
- **Kevin Cooper**, *Director, Center for Nuclear Education & Training, Indian River State College*
- **Gabriela Vazquez**, *US DOE Fellow, Florida International University*

This session focused on new hires and graduating engineers having open lines of communication with their employers. The session opened with the three panelists giving a brief introduction of themselves, followed by individual 15 minutes presentations. The audience followed the presentations by asking the speakers question by stepping to the microphone. (8 questions received).

Panel 44 tried to bridge the gap and open lines of communication by outlining the wants and needs of both the employer and young professionals about to enter the industry. The goal is to achieve a satisfied workforce and a better work environment.

**Melody Bell** broadcasted what the US Department of Energy Office of Environmental Management Office has to offer and the varying incentives for graduating young professionals as well as how they recruit their current interns. They are focusing their attention on different internships and pathway programs to entice current graduating students such as the DOE- FIU Workforce Development Program.

**Kevin Cooper** from the Indian River State College (IRSC) focused on nuclear industry training to make sure the demand for skilled nuclear technicians is met in a standardized and systematic way. Mr. Cooper described IRSC Regional Center for Nuclear Education & Training (RCNET) activities and nuclear courses for technicians being offered under this program.

**Gabriela Vazquez** from Florida International University explained that the nuclear industry does not have a problem recruiting young students. The real issue is retaining those students in the industry once they have entered. To build the loyalty of a young professional; their needs must be fulfilled. In great detail, Gabriela went on to discuss the needs of young professionals, which include leadership, opportunity, collaboration, fulfillment, flexibility and resources. Even if a company were to focus on only one of these needs it would help build the loyalty of that young professional to the employer. Gabriela explains that if the nuclear industry wants to retain

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high quality young professionals the older generation must serve as mentors and invest in the development and careers of these new engineers so that they can be confident that the future will be left in secure hands. And, by attending the Waste Management Symposia, those in attendance are already building for that future. Gabriela concluded her presentation with “One of the Waste Management Symposia’s guiding principles; that it believes in education and mentoring to prepare the next generation of nuclear waste professionals. So let’s build a workplace that will make us all happy, believe in us, and believe in our work because we are the future and there is hope.”