

INDUSTRY NEWSWATCH

EDUCATION

U.S. will need to triple the number of mining engineering graduates

Despite starting salaries that reach as high as \$60,000 a year, the U.S. mining industry is still having trouble attracting potential students to its mining schools. The U.S. mining schools will

need to graduate three times the number of mining engineers it currently does during the next 10 years just to replace those who will be retiring.

Kim McCarter, a professor and

chairman of the University of Utah's Mining Department, said those estimates do not assume any growth in demand for mining engineers. "That is just replacing those who are retiring."

McCarter said the number of mining engineers that graduated from U.S. mining schools is down to about 100. In 1980, that number was about 700, he said. But, from 1980 to 1984, the number of graduates decreased to about 200.

Meanwhile, The State Journal newspaper reported that 10 mining engineering departments at U.S. universities have closed since 1985. And, of the 15 remaining schools with mining engineering programs, many of them are merging with other departments and retitling their programs just to stay alive.

David Kanagy, executive director of SME, said the domestic mining industry would need 300 graduates a year to fill the needs created by retiring engineers. That means that 550 students would need to start as freshmen to produce 300 engineers, he said.

Starting salaries for new engineers are running between \$50,000 and \$60,000 a year, according to Mike Nelson. He is associate professor of mining engineering at the University of Utah. Last year, the university graduated five mining engineers, he said. Each received four to five job offers. "We have excellent scholarships and job opportunities for students," Nelson said. "But we do not seem to have a lot of students who are interested."

Part of the reason for the lack of interest is that mining is a misunderstood industry. Nelson said many potential students view mining as an outdated industry. In fact, however, mining is a very high tech business now with a lot of intellectual challenge and opportunities to do interesting things," Nelson said. ■

www.smenet.org

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

SME Publications Catalog

800-763-3132

www.smenet.org