NEWS RELEASE
March 8, 2013

SME Calls for Additional Federal Investment in U.S. Mining Schools

On March 8, 2013 the Society for Mining, Metallurgy and Exploration published a technical briefing paper calling for increased federal investment in U.S. mining schools. “Federal Support for U.S. Mining Schools” states that mining and geological engineering, mineral processing, extractive metallurgy and applied geology and geophysics programs at our universities are national assets that are critical to maintain and encourage the growth of the U.S. energy and minerals workforce. Mining schools have long sought to find sources of funding to support their programs and to continue to provide the personnel and talent needed by industry and government. A near total lack of funding continues to hamper the efforts of the schools.

“These programs suffer from dwindling federal reinvestment and R&D funding,” said SME Executive Director David L. Kanagy. “Without an adequate pipeline of qualified graduates and faculty at U.S. universities, the nation is at a distinct competitive disadvantage in the production of basic raw materials and energy.”

SME recommends five major federal actions to stave off the crisis in mining engineering schools and to ensure the U.S. has vigorous and respected academic mining engineering departments:

1. There must be dialogue between national, state, and university leaders regarding the importance of mining engineering programs to the U.S. economy and to national security needs.
2. Federal funding for minerals-related research needs to be dramatically increased. Centers of Excellence in Mineral Resources should be developed at the existing research universities and funded at a level sufficient to satisfy the academic metrics of each university and to develop a quality pool for the future professorate.
3. A national mineral resource strategy should be developed that includes policies that allow the U.S. to continue to produce mineral resources in an environmentally sound and profitable manner, particularly in support of national defense, advanced manufacturing, and competitiveness of domestic manufacturing.
4. A consolidated national minerals policy branch should coordinate mineral resource activities of all appropriate federal agencies, optimizing interactions with universities and industry, and advising Congress on actions needed for national mineral and energy security.
5. A positive national public message needs to be conveyed by the federal government that mining is essential to the nation’s economy, mining engineers are in critical shortage, those who work in the minerals industry are valued members of our society, and mining engineering is a career choice that should be encouraged for our young people.

***

For more information contact John Hayden, Director of Public Affairs and Government Relations, at (303) 948-4250 or hayden@smenet.org

SME is a professional society (nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation) whose nearly 15,000 members represent all professionals serving the minerals industry in more than 100 countries. SME members are engineers, geologists, metallurgists, educators, students and researchers. SME advances the worldwide minerals community through information exchange and professional development.

SME exists to be THE resource and advocate for the mining community.
For further details see www.smenet.org