

## Engineering Capacity



PHOTO: MYRON BOISJOLI

# Women engineers in demand

BY TAMMY LABER

Engineering may still be a largely male-dominated profession, but women engineers are increasingly sought after as employers realize the advantages of hiring women not only to be on engineering teams, but often in leadership roles.

“Some employers really appreciate having women as team leaders,” says Suzelle Barrington, P.Eng., President of the Canadian Engineering Memorial Foundation (CEMF). “They’re natural leaders who listen to everyone on the team and help all members participate.”

CEMF was started by Montreal engineer Claudette MacKay-Las-

sonde, P.Eng., (1948-2000) in memory of the 14 female engineering students gunned down in her city. Given that women comprise only about 18 per cent of engineering students today, CEMF’s mandate is to encourage women to enter the field and support them in advanced engineering education. “The more female engineers we

have, the friendlier the atmosphere will be for them,” Ms. Barrington explains.

Currently CEMF offers five undergraduate scholarships, several masters level scholarships and one at the doctoral level. The foundation currently receives support from Inco and, as of 2006, from AMEC.

“The scholarships are for

women only and are based on community outreach, not scholastic achievement,” explains Deborah Wolfe, P.Eng., CEMF board member and Director, Education, Outreach and Research at the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers. “To get the full scholarship, the women must give presentations to young people about engineering as

a career. The idea is to provide role models and help women consider engineering.

CEMF will continue to encourage women to enter the field, “until women students feel comfortable and have sufficient role models,” Ms. Barrington explains. “Until then we have to push, because if we don’t the numbers start to fall.” ■

## Employment opportunities strong and growing

BY TAMMY LABER

It’s a great time to be an engineer. With demand for professional engineers strong and rising, the news couldn’t be better for those considering a career in engineering or who’ve just graduated, and especially for those professionals with experience under their belts.

David Berrington, Director of Human Resources of Vancouver-based engineering consulting firm UMA, says, “Engineers with 10 to 15 years experience who not only have the project management skills, but who are also able to manage people and deal well with clients,” are highly sought after.

“The kind of people we’re looking for are able to attract clients and talent,” he says. “In engineering, you are surrounded by talent. It’s an asset to have people who can manage it and help build and drive the careers of people around them.”

The prospects for newcomers to the profession are also bright. “Some companies are hiring students after their third year and paying fourth year tuition in return for an agreement to work at the company,” says Dr. Chan Wirasinghe, P.Eng., Dean of the University of Calgary’s Shulich School of Engineering.

While acknowledging that many engineering graduates are making their way to Alberta, Dr. David Coleman, P.Eng., Dean of the University of New Brunswick Faculty of Engineering, notes New Brunswick also offers good prospects for experienced graduates. Atlantic Canada infrastructure projects, including highways and energy projects, are among the region’s big employment drivers.

“There are solid markets for civil and mechanical engineering, and IT opportunities are returning,” says Dr. Coleman. “Maritime companies like experience, and some are luring back Maritimers by placing ads in Calgary newspapers or The Globe and Mail’s national edition.”

Paul Morrison, P.Eng., President of the Consulting Engineering Division of ADI, a Maritime firm, says, “Business is steady, and in certain areas it’s hard to find appropriate staff. It’s difficult to find geotechnical people and senior transportation engineers.”

Steve McLean, P.Eng., the Executive Director of the Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Newfoundland and Labrador, says, “We’ve seen a steady growth in our membership of two to four per cent a year, largely attributable to the oil

and gas sector.”

It seems that regardless of the engineering specialty, a shortage of engineers is a pan-Canadian phenomenon. For example, Dr. Bruce Brown, PhD, P.Eng., who runs the Ontario firm Brown Associates Limited, says he’s having trouble hiring as many graduating environmental engineers as he needs. “My firm specializes in characterization of soil and groundwater and brownfields remediation, all essential to achieve rezoning and obtain building permits for new construction.” ■



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