

AIST Hosts Industry-University Round Table at Steel Properties and Applications Conference

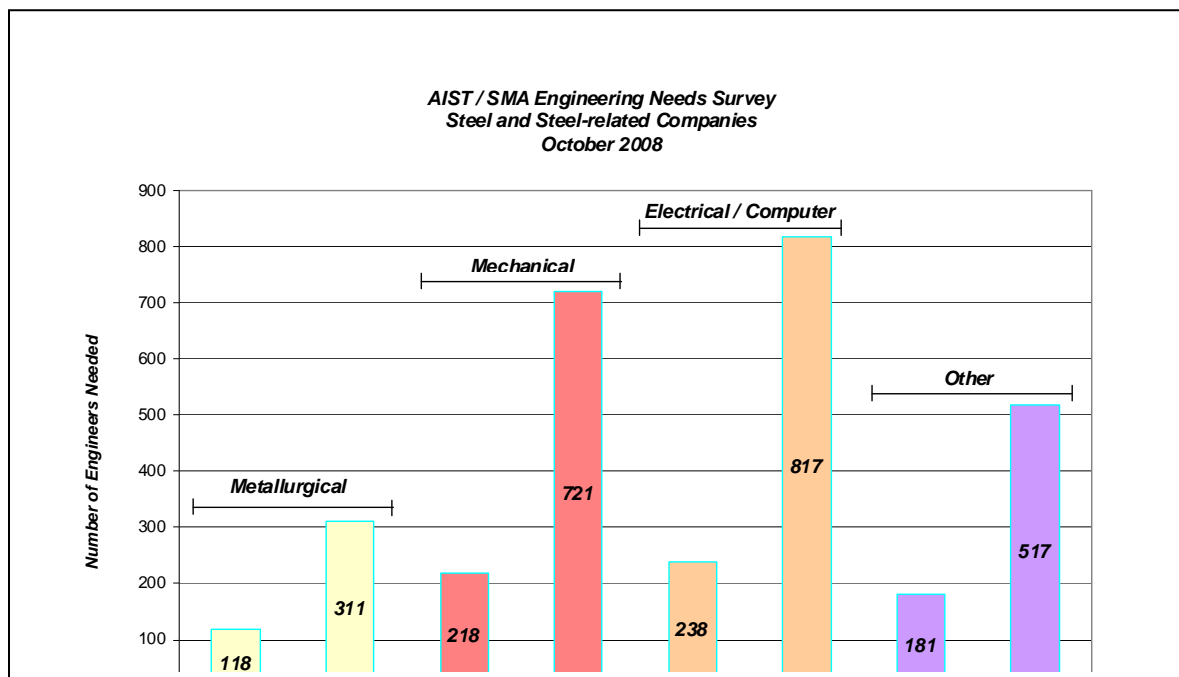
AIST invited industry representatives, both human resources and operations, as well as university representatives, both professors and career services professionals, to the second AIST Industry-University Round Table. In attendance were over 35 representatives with common goals:

- to encourage more students to major in metallurgical engineer and other technical disciplines of engineering,
- to encourage those engineering majors to pursue careers in the steel industry,
- and to improve the perception of the steel industry to students, teachers, parents and the general public.

The meeting, chaired by Missouri University of Science & Technology's Kent Peaslee, began with a review of an engineering employment needs survey originally requested by the University of Pittsburgh to assist the planning and budgeting needs of the university to produce the number of metallurgists and engineering graduates needed within the next year and in the next five years, as estimated by the steel and steel-related companies.

This unofficial survey was conducted through joint efforts of the Steel Manufacturer's Association (SMA) and AIST. The survey was sent to 42 steel manufacturers and related technology companies providing service to the North American steel industry. Twelve companies (29%) completed the survey providing less than ideal results, though still providing much needed data of future industry needs.

In summary, these steel companies expect to hire 311 metallurgical engineers will be hired over the next 5 years with 118 of those within the next year. In addition to metallurgical engineers, these 12 companies plan on hiring at least 2,000 engineers over the next 5 years, over 600 next year, mainly in the fields of mechanical, electrical and computer engineering.



The attendees also reviewed an internship survey provided by AIST. FeMET and StEEL Scholars who just completed their Summer 2008 internship were surveyed in order to provide important feedback to the companies providing the internships. Of the 19 scholars who received the survey, 16 responded. It was agreed that interns can be the best marketing tool for the steel industry, reporting back their positive experience to fellow classmates; or interns can be the worst marketing tool, reporting back their negative experience to fellow classmates. For details about the survey visit www.aist.org.

Dr. Peaslee presented information, based on statistics from Missouri University of Science & Technology, regarding "Recruiting Students – Issues from a Professor's Perspective." He reported the challenges facing the steel industry:

- Reduced interest in science/engineering by today's K-12 students
- Fierce competition for the limited number of engineering graduates
- Negative image of steel industry
- Fewer US universities with professors and/or programs emphasizing metals manufacturing

Dr. Peaslee reported on student perspectives of life in general and the profile of freshman engineering students including their activities, deciding factors for selecting a major, expectations of college, and technology. He discussed, based on statistics from one large career fair, the strong demand for engineers by industry including steel, non ferrous metals and mining, oil and energy, transportation, manufacturing and fabrication, testing and research labs, as well as consulting and engineering companies.

Dr. Peaslee suggested the following issues that may improve recruiting:

- Develop strategy to encourage young people to pursue a career in the steel industry

Improve interest in science and engineering and encourage the pursuit of steel related education in metallurgy, materials and other related fields by presenting opportunities much earlier in education to Jr. and Sr. high school summers, undergraduate research and interns/co-ops, and by developing advocates in education for the steel industry with teachers, counselors, professors and administrators.

Improve the image of the steel industry to those who are highly influenced by perception such as parents, children, teachers and high school counselors. The negative image needs to be replaced with positive images showing the steel industry as an exciting and promising career opportunity.

- Develop an environment where university professors can make a successful career in steel-related engineering

It is critical to have professors who are actively involved in the steel industry along with opportunity for a successful academic career while maintaining an academic program with an emphasis on ferrous metallurgy. A successful

program requires development of a sustained funded research program with a large number of graduate students and involvement by undergraduates.

It is imported to have steel industry presence at the target universities on a steady basis, during industry upturns and downturns.

The meeting concluded with agreement to create a one-page informational sheet the industry representatives can use to educate executive management to explain the professors' perspective and the funding necessary. A meeting between universities and executive management was discussed as well.

AIST will host the next Industry-University Round Table in conjunction with AISTech 2009, May 4-7, 2009, in St. Louis, Mo. For more information contact Lori Wharrey at lwharrey@aist.org.

(add photos from I/AISTfiles/MS&T'08 Photos file, numbers 003, 004 and 005)

