

Issues and Concerns Recruiting Women and Minorities into Mechanical Engineering Technology Programs

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Abstract

The demand of women and minorities in engineering study is well documented. Recruitment of underrepresented individuals into programs dominated by white males pose a number of problems. Each underrepresented area provides its own set of challenges in recruitment. Some factors that account for low engineering achievement by these underrepresented individuals include: low expectation of these individuals by teachers, various street cultures and peer pressure, so-called "learned helplessness", poverty, lack of substantial reading material in the home, poor study habits, an over reliance on style, emotion and sports; and a lack of role models. Additional problems occur in trying to keep the students once they are recruited. There are a variety of programs initiated by universities, government and industry to help in these areas.

Recruitment activities include visits to urban, suburban, and rural areas to offer scholarships and render parental financial aid assistance; developing positive relationships with community based organizations, performing presentations with high school juniors and seniors; and workshops at community colleges. Once these students are in the program, a department must work hard to keep the students in the program; activities include: special advisement of the students, retention workshops, motivation seminars and workshops with a focus on academic excellence. Recruitment in these areas is dynamic and transient with some efforts being more successful with one underrepresented group at one time than with another group at another time.

Results include a summary of recruitment efforts, economics of recruitment and plans for the future. A discussion of industry's needs in hiring employees from underrepresented areas to fill openings will be included. Finally, survey results from local industry on their overall hiring requirements over the next year will also be presented.