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## ***NASEE CONFERENCE WILL FOCUS ON ENGINEERING IN A GLOBAL ECONOMY***

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By Jerome Clark, Today correspondent

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BRIDGEPORT, Conn. -- The Northeast American Society of Engineering Education Conference will take place at the University of Bridgeport, Conn. April 3 -- 4.

The American Society of Engineering Education is a national nonprofit organization founded in 1893.

The ASEE is divided into four geographic regions, each region is further divided into three sections. NASEE is one section in Region I.

According to the national organization's Web site, the organization is composed of individuals and institutions committed to furthering education in engineering and engineering technology. In pursuit of academic excellence, ASEE develops policies and programs that enhance professional opportunities for engineering faculty members, and promotes activities that support increased student enrollments in engineering and engineering technology colleges and universities."

"The American Society of Engineering Education is the largest society in the country relating to various activities in engineering education. The ASEE has, at any given time, 300 to 500 engineering schools in the country associated with it," said Professor Tarek M. Sobh, vice president for graduate studies and research and dean of the School of Engineering at the University of Bridgeport.

"ASEE is a wonderful organization because it provides great resources in terms of conferences, networking, literature in journals or through the conference, and it is very helpful in addressing contemporary issues in engineering integration. It is helpful to all engineering professors and students."

The 2009 NASEE Conference, themed "Engineering in the New Global Economy," is the "annual regional gathering of engineering educators, exhibitors, students and anyone that has anything to do with engineering education," Sobh said.

The regional conference is geared toward professors, and graduate and undergraduate students. At the conference, students can participate in a poster competition, which is an opportunity to present their work in engineering.

When asked about responses to the conference theme, Sobh said, "So far, the reception has been great and there seems to be great interest. We are expecting a very large attendance at the conference. Given everything that is going on, the theme is very timely. We are facing completely different challenges. The challenges are not only national or local, but they are global."

The conference theme is an obvious response to the current state of the global economy, but less obvious is the forming of an engineering education that is cognizant of the need to foster versatile engineers.

"In the new global economy, we expect engineers not only to be versatile interdisciplinary engineers, but to be engineers who can communicate globally, who have wonderful communication skills and are aware of the societal impacts of the technology that they develop and who are capable of working across disciplines to create useful technologies that can benefit humanity," Sobh said.

Part of ASEE's vision statement is to serve "as the premier multidisciplinary society for individuals and organizations committed to advancing excellence in all aspects of engineering and engineering technology education."

"Done are the days when engineers are only professionals in one area of engineering such as mechanical, electrical and civil. Engineers are now taking courses in biology, physiology, chemistry, material sciences and sustainable energy which results in an engineer getting trained in a whole range of areas," Sobh said. "That is kind of what we feel of the conference and the theme. Based on the submissions to the conference that is what people are also talking about."

The field of engineering, despite its countless contributions to society, is still not a well known field of study among the general American populace. This fact is even more evident in Indian country.

"Speaking on the engineering profession in general, it is not a well publicized profession for minority groups and others. My feeling is that engineering has not been able to break into the masses as a wonderful profession," Sobh said. "The profession is very diversified and very encompassing, and is comparable to a profession in medicine or biology. Secondly, the engineering profession in general is a profession that requires very good preparation in mathematics and science. And, typically, in the United States these are not at a very high level, as in other places."

ASEE is a diversified and encompassing organization concerned with issues extending beyond the traditional boundaries designated to single study field of engineering.

The interdisciplinary approach to old and new problems will be beneficial to Native engineering faculty, students and communities.

Sobh's optimistic about such an approach, "If you look at any hope of us getting out of the economic problems, I think that a solution is to revamp our technology.

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