MEDIA RELEASE
MINERALS COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

Metallurgical Engineering Student Workshop Kicks Off

Final year metallurgical engineering students will this week get exposure to the latest ideas on the importance of good design in sustainable development, thanks to a unique partnership between industry and three leading academic institutions.

In Brisbane at the Sustainable Minerals Institute at the University of Queensland (UQ) today (Thursday July 31) the first workshop of the inaugural Metallurgical Education Partnership (MEP) course in final-year metallurgical plant design got underway. The MEP is a partnership between Curtin University - WA School of Mines (WASM), Murdoch University, the University of Queensland and The Minerals Tertiary Education Council (MTEC) to deliver courses in metallurgical engineering.

The workshop will bring industry experts together with final-year metallurgical engineering students of over a two and a half day program of interactive lectures and panel discussions. Zimi Meka, Chief Executive Officer of Ausenco Limited will open the workshop with a keynote address on the importance of good design to economic sustainability in the minerals industry.

Dr. Nimal Subasinghe, Senior Lecturer at Murdoch University said the student workshop provided an expert program that each university working individually would have struggled to put together. “The breadth and depth of presenters has come from the three universities collaborating to come up with a quality outcome for our students, and ultimately for industry,” he said.

The course, funded and implemented by the Minerals Tertiary Education Council (MTEC) of the Minerals Council of Australia (MCA), is the first time a collaborative course of this nature has been run in minerals education in Australia. Dr Kevin Tuckwell, Executive Director of MTEC said: “MTEC is proud to support minerals tertiary education courses that are innovative, collaborative and industry-focussed as they produce superior graduates for the Australian minerals industry and build sustainability into minerals-related university departments.”

The course involves students teaming up with other students across universities to design a mock metallurgical processing plant based on actual industry information.

A/Prof. Don Ibana, Head of Minerals Engineering and Extractive Metallurgy, WASM, said: “the course is a great opportunity for students from the three major extractive metallurgy schools across Australia to work together on their capstone course in the final semester of their degree. The experience students will gain in tackling this project, which enjoys a strong industry backing and involvement, will significantly benefit their transition into the workforce”.

The course will be run using a dedicated website (developed by the Teaching and Educational Development Institute at UQ), videoconferencing, web based communication/document management tools and strong mentoring support from the lecturers involved. There has also been a strong emphasis on the development of student team support mechanisms for the course, given the difficulties that may arise through the teams being comprised of students from different universities in different places.

Mr Bob Hannah, Senior Lecturer at UQ added: “this highly inventive and challenging course is truly world-class. The innovative learning and communication technologies being utilised along with the intrinsic nature of the role of industry in the development and delivery of the course, we believe, make it a unique amongst final year engineering courses in Australia”.

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