

# USACE Uses New Techniques to Attract Graduates

By Mr. Scott Nielsen

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is trying new techniques such as “speed-networking,” on-the-spot tentative job offers, and Facebook to attract recent college engineering graduates. They are trying to reach these graduates in new ways, to introduce them to the exciting and fulfilling work they could have with the Corps of Engineers. The South Pacific Division commander thinks that if students know about the Corps, many will choose to work with them.

A new technique that the Division tried is called speed-networking, which operates on the premise of the speed-dating model and allows multiple recruiters and students to meet for 10 minutes, introduce themselves and their organizations, and talk about what each is looking for. When the time is up, the recruiters switch and move to another table of students.

This speed-networking was part of a three-day conference in Burlingame, California—hosted by the American Society of Civil Engineer’s Construction Institute and sponsored by USACE and other agencies—to meet and discuss several aspects of civil engineering, including career opportunities. These events helped to better understand what graduates are looking for so the agencies can try to tailor what they can offer the graduates.

This technique gave the students a chance to ask questions that they might not have asked otherwise, because they felt intimidated walking up to a booth and asking. This speed-networking format allowed the students to speak with representatives from each organization. Their questions ranged from the projects being worked on to vacation time, but the most common questions had to do with where they would be working, would they be able to do different things, and would they be in charge of their own projects.

A recruiter for the Corps of Engineers said that when we think we know what the students are interested in, we often are surprised. He said that typically students are interested both in traveling and the ability to work on multiple projects.

The South Pacific Division is also testing the social networking site called Facebook as part of its recruiting efforts. Facebook allows the students to upload their photos from the conference and share them with their friends who were not there. The Division hopes that other friends will learn about USACE and job opportunities from those who attended the conference. The Division plans to use this tool to provide

information about jobs and opportunities in a way that is more accessible to current students.

At the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) National Conference in Anaheim, California, this year, the Corps provided pictures and videos of the event on a Facebook site dedicated to AISES, which the students could use to share their own photos and comments. The Corps hopes that this process will allow them to find a new way to let graduates know about the jobs that are available and also allow them to get feedback about what graduates are looking for.

***“speed-networking...allows multiple recruiters and students to meet”***

The Corps of Engineers is also testing on-the-spot tentative job offers at recruiting fairs to better fill the positions it needs and to attract the graduates who are ready to work and students interested in internships. The Corps knows what jobs it needs to fill and there are students who are ready to begin working now, so this is an effort to streamline the process of filling those positions.

USACE has a three-tier approach to recruiting at career fairs:

- Junior professionals meet with the graduates.
- Senior employees answer questions and interview.
- Someone with hiring authority coordinates getting the graduates started.

There is a lot of competition for fresh new talent graduating now, and the Corps hopes that using innovative techniques will allow them to reach the students in a way that is better suited to them. Even if the students do not sign on with USACE immediately after college, they—and perhaps their network of friends—have been exposed to the Corps’s mission and what it can offer and may decide to apply for jobs there in the future.



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