Petroleum Engineering Enrollment Drops

Enrollment numbers for petroleum engineering students at LSU and the University of Louisiana at Lafayette have been declining for five years, reports the Acadiana Advocate, due to the deterrent of persistently low oil and gas market prices. LSU and UL Lafayette offer the only petroleum engineering programs in the state. Here’s a look at the numbers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>LSU</th>
<th>UL Lafayette</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2015</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2016</td>
<td>649</td>
<td>551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2017</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2018</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2019</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2020</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among the areas of change raising questions about the discipline are the auto industry’s adoption of new energy sources and the possible deemphasis of fossil fuel by the Biden administration.

Audit: Louisiana needs to improve emissions enforcement

State auditors are calling on the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality to do a better job of identifying industrial polluters that don’t properly report air emission violations and enforcing those violations more aggressively, reports the Associated Press. The new state audit “found the time it took for the state agency to issue enforcement actions after a known violation more than doubled between financial year 2015 and 2019, from nearly 10 months to nearly 20 months.” Further, the auditors wrote that the department “doesn’t adequately track the penalties it has assessed, whether the penalties were paid or which facilities fail to submit self-
monitoring reports on emissions.”

## Louisiana Job Opportunity

**Civil Engineer**  
Spackman Mossop Michaels

See other engineering job opportunities on the [NSPE Job Board](#).

Stay up to date on legislative issues through the [NSPE Advocacy Center](#).

## New Report: Valuing Professional Licensing

For years, professional associations and regulatory boards lacked hard data that demonstrated the value of licensing. In 2020, the Alliance for Responsible Professional Licensing (ARPL) sought to fill that information gap by commissioning Oxford Economics to help better understand the nuanced impacts of licensing on professions and trade and vocational occupations. NSPE is a founding member of ARPL.

The report *Valuing Professional Licensing in the United States*, includes several key findings:

- Across all professions and occupations, licensing is associated with a **6.5% average increase in hourly earnings**, even after accounting for the job holder’s educational attainment, gender, and racial demographics.

- Among professionals in technical fields requiring significant education and training, a license narrows the gender-driven wage gap by about one third and the race-driven wage gap by about half.

- Those in trade and vocational occupations can expect a **7.1% hourly wage increase** after becoming licensed, while those in a profession requiring advanced education and training can expect a **3.6% wage increase** after becoming licensed.

ARPL will host a live webinar on February 24, 2021 (3:00 p.m. eastern standard time) to review findings and conclusions of the report and share new strategies for lawmaker outreach. [Register now](#).

## Licensing Reform Must Prioritize Public Safety, Says NSPE President
NSPE President Tricia Hatley has once again made the case for keeping public health, welfare, and safety at the forefront of efforts to reform occupational licensure and increase mobility.

In a recent column directed to state and local government leaders, Hatley warns of the risks of implementing one-size-fits-all universal licensure proposals that do not maintain necessary education and experience standards.

*Most people agree professionals should be allowed to move across state lines and earn a living with the least cost and hassle possible. Likewise, most people want to protect the public’s health, safety and welfare by ensuring they are being served by qualified professionals who have the knowledge, skills and experience for the job. This is especially true in highly technical, high-impact professions that the Alliance for Responsible Professional Licensing represents like certified public accountants, architects, engineers, surveyors and landscape architects.*

*Here comes the rub: many of the universal licensing proposals being pitched to state lawmakers, including those put forth by the American Legislative Exchange Council and in Arizona, tend to focus exclusively on the first point—improving mobility—while disregarding the second—ensuring standards necessary to protect the public.*

*In other words, universal licensing mandates don’t consider the critical importance of substantially equivalent requirements between states. Instead, they dictate that states must accept a license issued by any state without regard for, understanding of, or any input in, the underlying minimum competency requirements behind the license.*

Read the full op-ed column.

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**PEs Can Strengthen Autonomous Vehicle Safety**

NSPE is calling on the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to rely on the expertise of professional engineers and follow recommendations in the Society’s [Autonomous Vehicle Policy Guide](https://www.nspe.org/advocacy/autonomous-vehicle-policy) as part of the federal safety frame work for automated driving systems.

In recent public comments, NSPE President Tricia Hatley informed the agency that NSPE is committed to creating a world where the public can be confident that engineering decisions affecting their lives are made by qualified and ethically accountable professionals. NSPE Position
Statement No. 03-1772 states that the testing and deployment of AVs must include a professional engineer. The rationale for the position is rooted in a professional engineer’s ethical obligation to protect the public health, safety, and welfare.

The Society also recommends that the NHTSA implement a third-party verification process. A third-party verification process should establish that the ADS technology under review meets a minimal level of safety, as determined by an assessment of risk. This can be done through the submittal of risk assessments audited by a professional engineer who is in responsible charge of the third-party verification process.