

MEDIA RELEASE

MEA receives \$1.325M for implementation of national collaborative mining education program

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Yesterday, the Federal Minister for Education, Science and Training, The Hon Julie Bishop MP, announced a \$1.325M grant through the “Collaboration and Structural Reform” (CASR) funding scheme, for a project which will see the full implementation of a world-class national, collaborative mining engineering undergraduate tertiary education program, by June 2008. The grant has been awarded to The University of New South Wales, as the host university for the Administration Unit of the Mining Education Australia (MEA) Joint Venture.

The MEA joint venture was recently established between the three major providers of undergraduate mining engineering programs in Australia – Curtin University of Technology (WA School of Mines), The University of New South Wales, and The University of Queensland. MEA has developed from earlier collaboration achieved with the support of the Minerals Council of Australia, through the Minerals Tertiary Education Council.

The MEA Program will be a national education program, with a common curriculum for the 3rd and 4th years of an undergraduate degree. It will involve a range of different and innovative teaching methods and considerable student interaction across the country. The academic expertise, resources and teaching skills from the three Member institutions will be combined to provide students with the best possible education across the full spectrum of mining engineering courses.

The provision of the CASR grant provides MEA with essential funding to enable development of a whole suite of new course teaching resources; the development and implementation of some quite innovative and interactive teaching and delivery approaches which will include students working and interacting as teams across the country; and a wider range of elective courses.

CASR funds will also provide for development of a national marketing strategy to help attract students into the mining engineering field, as well as the establishment of an “Associate” Program with a number of additional universities, in both cities and regional areas, where students can study for two years in a more generic engineering program, before transferring into an MEA Member institution for 3rd and 4th year.

Professor Bruce Hebblewhite, the Executive Director of MEA said today “the financial support from this CASR grant will provide MEA with valuable resource development funding, as well as firmly establishing the MEA venture in a fully operational form by June 2008.”

“MEA has the potential to provide a world-class mining education program, with access to students from all parts of Australia, and internationally, at a time when the mining industry is desperately short of mining graduates. This nationally collaborative initiative is all about working outside and beyond traditional university boundaries. Students will have access to a combined national cohort of mining academics who will be working together, not just on course development, but also course delivery.”

The implementation of the MEA Program, through the support of the CASR funding, will also help to secure the ongoing viability of mining education in all three member institutions. Without moving to the MEA model, but remaining as independent programs in a “stand-alone” mode of operation, these small programs could easily have been threatened, both in terms of availability of staff, and financial viability.

“Through this major restructuring of mining education under the CASR program, it is hoped that MEA will provide a clear example to other disciplines, of how universities can move to a much higher degree of real collaboration – to the benefit of all parties involved. MEA will also be well positioned to move into the international mining education arena, where educational providers in other countries are struggling to survive on their own, under more conventional education frameworks”, commented Professor Hebblewhite.

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