NATIONAL ENGINEERING FORUM

National Engineering Forum (NEF) Regional Dialogue: Engineering Thought Leadership
Atlanta Region hosted by the Georgia Institute of Technology and the Georgia Research Alliance
November 20, 2014

Overarching Mission

Lockheed Martin, the Council on Competitiveness, and the National Academy of Engineering launched the National Engineering Forum to address three engineering challenges in the United States: the *capacity* of our technical talent to fill current and future jobs, our engineering workforce's *capability* to address 21st century challenges, and our nation's *competitiveness* on the world stage. A series of regional dialogues is creating a grassroots network of key influencers from academia, business, government, the media, and students. Sustained input from these groups will make an impact on the NEF agenda, helping turn findings into action. The regional dialogues will culminate in a national cornerstone event. The regional dialogues provide NEF with a nationwide survey of thought leaders, and enable a dynamic view of both the past and current state of engineering based on the expertise of those best positioned to help address the three engineering challenges. These sessions provide a platform for an engaging narrative that appeal to students and engineering professionals alike.

Key themes from the Atlanta regional dialogue

Leaders from industry, academia, government, and the media participated in the NEF regional dialogue event on the campus of the Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech), co-hosted by Georgia Tech and the Georgia Research Alliance. Tom Noonan, seasoned entrepreneur and Georgia Tech alumnus, provided the evening's keynote remarks, calling out the need to interconnect entrepreneurship, industry and education to develop the engineers required for building the societies of the future. Participants reinforced that point. Despite being one of the fastest growing cities in the country, attendees of the dialogue explained, more Georgia Tech engineers are leaving Atlanta than are staying – creating a particular skills deficit in the region. Dialogue discussants also lamented the culture in the United States that is accepting of poor science and math skills and affords engineering little social standing. Yet the tone of the dialogue was optimistic, focusing on leveraging the strengths of the Greater Atlanta region such as robust physical and cyber infrastructure, low cost of living, high quality of life, world class universities, and the congeniality of southern communities that facilitates collaboration.

Recommendations that emerged in the dialogue

- Align the strategies of regional businesses, educational institutions, and government agencies to improve educational outcomes and connect businesses with the workforce they need.
- Improve the public perception of engineering by highlighting prominent chief executive officers with engineering backgrounds.
- Expand the pipeline of engineering students by enacting public policies to support young students in marginalized communities and reform immigration policies to retain foreign-born students educated in the United States.
- Increase industry engagement at the K-12 level to raise awareness of engineering as an exciting and lucrative career path.
- Expand cooperative education programs to include the Greater Atlanta start-up community.