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SRNS Engineering Leadership Development Program Mixes Practical Experience with a Personal Touch

AIKEN, S.C. (March 21, 2016) – A group of engineers newly hired by Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) at the Department of Energy Savannah River Site (SRS) are participating in a training and development program some may find unconventional.

“Our Engineering Leadership Development Program (ELDP) is somewhat unusual because it focuses on a type of professional attention, support and respect that, quite frankly, doesn’t exist in many large corporations in America these days,” said Mike Hughes, SRNS manager, ELDP. “In fact, we are going to do everything in our power to ensure their first six months here is a positive and rewarding start to their career.”

According to Hughes, recruiting and retaining engineers is a challenge for nearly every major company throughout the U.S.

“ELDP is leading the way towards shaping the future of SRNS and the site,” said Hughes. “We’re developing genuine, long-term relationships, which are a key to success for any organization. In addition, we’ve worked hard to create a process to ease that sometimes difficult transition from college student to full-time employee. This program is focused on demonstrating that we truly care about their well-being and long-term success, both as individuals and SRNS team members. We are investing in their futures, and the future of the site.”

The core of the program involves an investment in technical engineering and operational training, combined with a series of short-term projects in a variety of facilities and processes across the site. To further enhance this diverse process, an emphasis is placed on knowledge



SRNS engineering mentor Glynn Dyer (left) describes the Savannah River Site H-Canyon chemical separations process to newly hired engineers Lisa Lee and Jae Choi.

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transfer and one-on-one quality time with experienced engineers who act as mentors. Mentoring ensures these new employees and future site leaders gain skills and confidence in their new role.

Lisa Lee is one of the 30 new engineers participating in the ELDP. A recent graduate of the University of South Carolina with a degree in chemical engineering, Lee, at age 40, is starting a new career a little later in life.

“The Engineering Leadership Development Program at SRNS offers a unique experience to new graduates transitioning into the engineering profession,” said Lee. “In this program, experienced members of the SRNS team take the time to guide us through a variety of projects and training courses that prepare us for successful placement on site. The support and guidance received in this program makes me feel that I am an important part of the team, not just another new hire. The program is definitely working.”

“Since we’re hiring about five engineers a month, this is an ongoing program,” said Hughes. “We’re investing most of our recruiting resources into local and regional colleges and universities. This strategy supports their engineering programs while providing candidates who have local ties, helping to increase employee satisfaction and retention at SRS.”

Hughes also noted that the program emphasizes professional values and behaviors based upon the SRNS Standards of Excellence. “This includes safety and security, a strong work ethic, integrity, having a ‘can do’ attitude, exercising good judgment, delivering results, teamwork and building strong relationships based on mutual trust and respect,” said Hughes.

“As engineers, we recognize that one of our key roles is to be the ‘technical conscience’ for our company,” said Lee. “As such, we help to ensure the safe operation of our facilities and successful execution of site missions. It is an important responsibility that we take seriously.”

Engineers currently in SRNS’ Engineering Leadership Development Program are graduates of outstanding schools from across the country: Alabama A&M University, Auburn University, Augusta University, The Citadel, Clemson University, Florida State University, Georgia Polytechnic State University, Georgia Southern University, Georgia Tech, Mississippi State University, Missouri University of Science and Technology, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, South Carolina State University, Virginia Tech, Widener University, Tuskegee University, University of Minnesota-Duluth and the University of South Carolina.

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions is a Fluor-led company whose members are Fluor Federal Services, Newport News Nuclear and Honeywell, responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy’s Savannah River Site, including the Savannah River National Laboratory, located near Aiken, South Carolina.

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