

Industry urged to sponsor student research

■ Research dollars often doubled by government funding

Mining companies that need research done should consider sponsoring university students to do the work because they have a chance to double their money through government funding.

“As the mining industry is going up and up and metal prices are booming, they’ve got money, so they’re more willing to support research projects.”

-Peter Hollings, assistant professor of geology, Lakehead University

according to an assistant geology professor at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay.

Peter Hollings gave a presentation on industry-university research partnerships at the Ontario Prospectors

Association’s Exploration and Geoscience Symposium in Sudbury Dec. 12.

Many government research funding agencies, including the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), Ontario Centres of Excellence and FedNor, will match industry research dollars when companies sponsor student work, said Hollings.

“Universities can provide expertise and in-depth study. As well, when working with universities, there’s this potential to double their money if they go to a federal or provincial granting agency,” he said. “It makes good sense for them.”

Companies can sponsor students’ thesis projects at the honour’s, master’s or doctorate level, he said. Students have access to specialized equipment and the latest analytical techniques, and receive help from their professors.

If they don’t want to sponsor a thesis, mining companies can also give students a job for the summer, thus increasing the chances that they will work for the company later.

He also said mining companies can sponsor an NSERC research



Peter Hollings, assistant professor of geology at Lakehead University

chair at a university, which costs about \$100,000 per year for five years.

Hollings cautioned industry representatives that they need to know what they’re getting into before sponsoring student research.

It can take a student anywhere from one to five years to complete a thesis, depending on their academic level, he said. Student research is probably inappropriate for companies that need information right away,

Hollings said.

As well, “academic people live and die by publication,” so student researchers need to retain intellectual property rights and publish their work.

Companies wanting to take advantage of research money from government funding agencies have to prove their project will benefit the province or country. But given the importance of mining to the economy in Northern Ontario, that’s not a hard sell, said Hollings.

The professor said the strong mining sector has been good news for his students.

“Right now, a lot of my students are being sponsored by mining companies. As the mining industry is going up and up and metal prices are booming, they’ve got money, so they’re more willing to support research projects,” he said.

“I’ve got projects going with Musselwhite Mine, Metalcorp and Huston Lake Mining. Most of my current graduate students are at least partially funded by mining and exploration. Things are going really well in that respect.” ■

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