



Professional nuclear engineers and college students from all over the world converged in Idaho Falls for the 10-day Modeling, Experimentation and Validation (MeV) Summer School cosponsored by Idaho National Laboratory.

Students and scientists gearing up for nuclear boot camp

By Brianna McNall, Nuclear Science & Technology Intern

New nuclear reactors are coming down the line, and Idaho National Laboratory is helping nuclear engineers get ready for them.

This year at the second annual Modeling, Experimentation and Validation (MeV) Summer School, nuclear-engineering students and professionals will come to Idaho Falls for some high-intensity learning. From July 20-29, they'll get a crash course in nuclear system simulation and safety analysis.

Kimberlyn Mousseau, secretary of the 2010 MeV Summer School and deputy division director of Nuclear Science and Engineering at INL, enjoys putting the school together, though last year's inaugural effort was a real challenge.

"This year is easier," she said.

A similar school is held in France and Germany. The Frederic Joliot/Otto Hahn (FJOH) Sommerschule is in its 10th year, and it focuses on "Physics, Fuels and Systems."

"We don't want to compete with the European school," Mousseau said. She added that a few members of the MeV school advisory board have also had some involvement with the FJOH. "They've been very helpful by providing valuable input into making the MeV successful."

MeV works to attract students from all over the world. This year, students and professionals from more than seven countries will come to learn from experts in nuclear modeling, simulation and experimentation.

Mousseau said Truc-Nam Dinh, the MeV school's dean, makes sure that lecturers are the top experts in their fields, people who are knowledgeable and passionate about their work.

Last year's MeV school was a bit surprising.



Forty-three students signed up for MeV this year.

"Several lecturers ended up attending all of the MeV sessions," Mousseau said. The rooms were packed. The school's organizers had planned on only enough space for the students, not realizing that the lecturers would want to attend all the lessons, too. Lecturers wanted copies of the books, and they put in the same long days that the students did – without the homework.

The 2010 MeV students have to be out of bed and at the Idaho Falls Center for Higher Education before 8 a.m. They get two half-hour breaks during the day, but lunch and dinner both require multi-tasking. There are speakers during meals, so they don't really count as breaks.

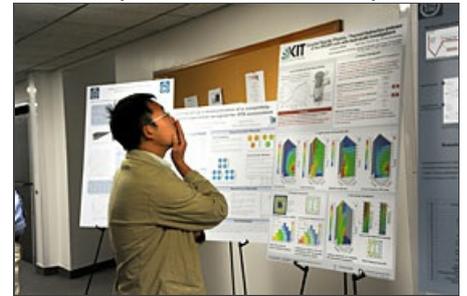
"You get in line, get your food, sit down with your team and listen to the speaker," Mousseau said. "At the end of the week, the students are saying, 'Oh my gosh, this was like way too much!'"

Still, it couldn't have been too exhausting, since a couple of the students from last year are coming back to act as "mentors" to the new students.

According to Mousseau, the school is trying to give students intense training in nuclear safety.

"They're teaching a lot about modeling and simulation," she said. Lectures even cover future modeling and simulation needs, like probabilistic risk assessments and predictive simulations.

"They're going to get a flavor for the work we do here," Mousseau said.



A couple of the students who participated last year returned this year to act as mentors for new students.

The school provides a chance for nuclear professionals to update their knowledge, and for INL to train a new generation of nuclear engineers.

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