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FMU's new Industrial Engineering program in full swing

Francis Marion University's new industrial engineering program is underway, with 15 students enrolled in its opening semester.

The new baccalaureate program includes a variety of quantitative systems design and management courses that can be applied to a broad range of industry and business enterprises.

The program is a partnership between FMU and Florence-Darlington Technical College. FMU's President Dr. Fred Carter said it will meet the workforce needs of South Carolina industry and provide students with gainful employment upon graduation.

"Government officials and industry leaders have repeatedly urged FMU to offer an engineering program and we have responded," said Carter. "The demand for industrial engineers has never been greater, and we are now positioned to better serve our community, our region and our state."

Surveys show that industrial engineers earn about \$75,000 annually in South Carolina.

It is in Dr. Lorna Cintron-Gonzalez's Engineering 101 Course each Tuesday and Thursday that these students have begun their journey to one day becoming the contributors to the management decision-making process at their future places of employment.

That, says Cintron-Gonzalez, is what industrial engineering is all about.

"What distinguishes it (IE) from other branches of engineering is that the industrial engineer must not only consider the behavior of inanimate objects, but also that of people as they interface with these objects, as they operate as an organization," says Cintron-Gonzalez. "That is an art, a skill, that some probably didn't realize they had until the program was offered."

In December 2013, when the S.C. Commission on Higher Education gave its nod of approval for the new Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering degree program, it was the final regulatory step for the engineering program initiative, which has been in the works for two years.

The IE program is housed by FMU's Department of Physics and Astronomy, which oversees programs in pre-engineering and engineering technology at the college. Students use laboratory facilities at the FDTC's Southeastern Institute of Manufacturing and Technology (SiMT) building.

Last Published: January 24, 2014 2:06 PM