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Society for Mining, Metallurgy & Exploration Applauds Trump Administration's \$3 Billion Investment in Domestic Mining and Critical Minerals Workforce

SME calls the education and training funding a critical step toward reversing a decades-long decline in the domestic mining workforce

The Society for Mining, Metallurgy & Exploration (SME) today welcomed the Trump administration's announcement of approximately [\\$3 billion in new investments in domestic critical minerals](#) mining, including more than \$180 million directed toward mining education and workforce development programs.

The announcement, made Friday at a [Presidential roundtable](#) held at the State Department, attended by university and industry leaders alongside Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum, and Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick, includes a \$100 million Department of Energy initiative known as the PROSPECT program, which is aimed at doubling the number of graduates in mining and critical-minerals-related degree programs within two years. It also includes more than \$80 million in additional funding for workforce development and technology hubs at the Colorado School of Mines, the South Dakota School of Mines, and Johns Hopkins University, alongside a broader package of mining and mineral-processing project investments.

SME notes that this funding arrives at a pivotal moment for the profession. According to data compiled by SME and the Society of Mining Professors, enrollment in U.S. mining engineering

programs has fallen sharply, from nearly 1,500 students eight years ago to fewer than 600 in 2023. This decline threatens the pipeline of engineers, geologists, and skilled tradespeople needed to responsibly develop the minerals essential to national security, energy, and manufacturing.

"Even with billions being invested in mining projects, people trained to permit, engineer, and safely operate them are what bring them to fruition," said Melissa Russell, Executive Director and CEO of SME. "The education and workforce components of this announcement matter as much as the mine financing itself. SME has tracked enrollment decline and its industry impacts closely, and we're glad to see it treated as the urgent priority it is."

Department heads from all 14 ABET-accredited mining schools were invited to participate in Friday's roundtable. Among those in attendance was Kray Luxbacher, Executive Director and Head of the University of Arizona School of Mining Engineering & Mineral Resources and a member of SME's Mineral School Department Heads Committee.

"Every mining school department head I talk to is fighting to grow enrollment to meet industry demand," said Luxbacher. "This funding is an opportunity to change the trajectory of mining, to bring in students who didn't grow up around mining, show them what a modern career in this field looks like, and give our programs the resources to compete for their attention."

SME encourages Congress and the administration to build on this momentum by ensuring that education and workforce funding is sustained over the long-term, not just as a one-time investment. A durable domestic supply of critical minerals depends not only on capital for mines and processing facilities, but on a steady, well-trained pipeline of American engineers, geologists, technicians, and skilled tradespeople to design, permit, build, and operate them safely and responsibly.

The organization stands ready to collaborate with federal agencies, universities, and industry partners to help implement these programs effectively and to ensure the next generation of mining professionals is prepared to meet the nation's growing mineral needs.

About SME

The Society for Mining, Metallurgy & Exploration (SME) brings together the mining and mineral industry's brightest and most dedicated professionals. Over 14,000 global members advance their careers with the world-class technical resources, educational programs, networking opportunities and professional development tools from SME. Our members are focused on sharing best practices for safety, environmental stewardship and moving mining forward. SME. *Inspiring mining professionals worldwide.*