

In the 21st century knowledge economy, we are witnessing an ever increasing pace of knowledge creation in the sciences and engineering. Competing in this global economy requires a science and engineering workforce that is continually at the technological forefront. Dr Charles Vest, President of NAE, in a speech (University of Michigan, October 15, 2007) put it simply: *prospering in the knowledge age requires people with (updated) knowledge.*□

The Lifelong Learning Imperative (LLI) project was initiated by the [National Academy of Engineering](#) to assess current practices in lifelong learning for engineering professionals, reexamine the underlying assumptions and outline strategies for addressing unmet needs. A workshop was organized in June 2009 to frame the project and identify issues critical for structuring education for engineering professionals in the 21st century knowledge economy. For example, who can/should provide the learning opportunities; what allowances need to be made for practicing engineers to be able to take advantage of the learning opportunities; in what format and where; do the opportunities need to be certified; if so by whom; who pays for this advanced education; what are appropriate roles for the private sector, government, and academia; and so on. By bringing together participants from stakeholder groups including policy makers, the LLI workshop helped initiate a national discussion on lifelong learning in the sciences and engineering necessary for sustaining a cutting edge workforce in this knowledge age.

Building on the 2009 workshop, NAE in partnership with the University of Illinois is conducting a study to pursue the issues identified in the workshop and synthesize, organize, and disseminate information on continual learning for engineers. This study will include a survey of engineering professionals and other stakeholders to address the questions above. By engaging all stakeholders including policy makers, the study will address the need for developing viable strategies for sustaining workforce competencies necessary for continuing our nation's preeminence in the 21st century knowledge economy. This effort will also include a workshop in early fall of 2011 to share initial findings and discuss next steps.

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