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Vincent S. Haneman, Jr.

Steven Lay, reporter

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Steven Lay said engineering is one of the most popular majors at American colleges and universities. Finding qualified instructors is a serious problem today according to Dr. Vincent Haneman, dean of the School of Engineering at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Two years ago when he was president of the American Society for Engineering Education he directed the formation of a two-year study to evaluate the problem. Haneman said the results show some very disastrous trends. In public schools 9.4 percent of instructor positions went unfilled and eight percent of instructor positions in private schools went unfilled. On average nine percent of positions were unfilled and unfilled for more than two years in most cases. This means less and less young people who are qualified not going on to be involved in engineering education. Lay talked about aging faculty. Many professors are also being recruited away from schools and entering into private industry. Three fourths of the engineering faculty have had to increase their teaching loads. Close to half the schools have dropped classes because no one was there to teach them. Research projects have been dropped to meet the classroom needs. Haneman said classroom education is not the sole item in engineering education. Other things essential to education is research to bring modern technology to the students. Right now the schools are in a disastrous situation because these techniques are being developed in industry and they are not being taught in the schools across the country. Not too many years ago new technologies were coming from the schools of engineering. Lay said more than a third of engineering schools reported cutting research for their engineering faculty. One of the main reasons for the faculty shortage is money. Faculty are earning as much as first-year engineering graduates and faculty must have three more years of education. Haneman said the shortage of faculty in Alaska could curtail enrollment. He thought this was the worst thing they could do. Right now they are continuing to accept qualified students. He mentioned a few of the colleges and universities which were cutting back. He said they must maintain quality so all Alaskans have the opportunity to pursue the field of their choice. They must also have opportunities to practice their professions with quality backgrounds to be able to do this.

Stephen Lay reported on activities on campus and in Fairbanks.