

## **A degree from South Dakota mining school is as good as gold – Los Angeles Times**

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Harvard University's graduates are earning less than those from the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology after a decade-long commodity bull market created a shortage of mining workers.

Those leaving the college of 2,300 students this year got paid a median salary of \$56,700, according to PayScale Inc., which tracks employee compensation data from surveys. Median salary for those graduating from Harvard, where tuition fees are almost four times higher, was \$54,100.

Those scheduled to leave the campus in Rapid City, S.D., in May are already getting offers, at a time when about 1 in 10 recent U.S. college graduates is out of work.

"It doesn't seem to be too hard to get a job in mining," said Jaymie Trask, a 22-year-old chemical-engineering major who was offered a post paying more than \$60,000 a year at Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold Inc. "If you work hard in school for four or five years, you're pretty much set."

A fourfold gain in commodities in the last decade reflects both surging demand and the industry's failure to keep up. Although new mineral deposits are getting harder to find, companies also are struggling to add enough skilled workers. That's partly a legacy of U.S. colleges cutting back on mining programs. There were fewer than 28,000 people employed in U.S. metals mining in 2004, down from 58,000 in 1993, the National Mining Assn. estimates. By 2011, it had rebounded to 40,000.

As many as 78,000 additional U.S. workers will be needed by 2019 to replace retirees, the Society of Mining, Metallurgy & Exploration said in a report in January. In Australia, the largest shipper of coal and iron ore, there will be a shortfall of 1,700 mine engineers, 3,000 geoscientists and 36,000 other workers in the five years ending in 2015, the report said.

Demand for mining-school graduates is exceptional in the U.S., where the unemployment rate for people ages 20 to 24 with bachelor's degrees was 11.8% in July. The jobless rate across the economy held above 8% for a 43rd consecutive month in August, government data show.