

Robert Mensah-Biney is an SME Local Section Hero

Local Sections are an integral part of SME, providing a forum for SME members to gather and helping to facilitate the exchange of information and increase grassroots participation in SME programs and services. Through involvement in their local section, members have the opportunity to network with their peers and to hear valuable presentations.

At the core of each local section is a group of dedicated volunteers who recruit members, organize section activities, work with local SME student chapters, raise money, provide educational outreach and more. To recognize our member volunteers for their hard work at the local section level, SME has created the Local Section Hero program. This column highlights an individual who carries out unique, exemplary or long-standing activities at a local section.

If you know someone who is providing exemplary service to your local section, visit www.smenet.org. Under Membership click on Local Sections, then Local Section Hero Awards. Take a few moments to nominate that individual as a Local Section Hero.

Robert Mensah-Biney — Carolinas Section

Robert Mensah-Biney, Ph.D., is the director of the North Carolina State Minerals Research Laboratory (MRL) in Asheville, NC. He has been an active member of SME for the past 25 years, a past chair of the SME Carolinas section and has single-handedly organized several annual meetings and field trips within the region. These meetings have given the local professionals and students the unique opportunity to discuss challenges and enhance their abilities. They have been warmly welcomed by many mining and geology companies and professionals and students from the Carolinas and beyond.

Biney's exceptional work has encouraged industry pro-

fessionals and companies to contribute to these meetings through their participation, sponsorships and exhibits. This has made these events more affordable and useful for the students and local public. He has also been involved in SME educational activities including his support of the MRL Educational Outreach Program, which relates the laboratory's purpose and activities to the general public. Currently, he supervises outreach activities such as sending rock kits, free of charge, to the K-12 schools in the region and classroom presentations on rocks and minerals to K-12 students. His supportive role has been crucial to the success of these educational programs. In addition, Biney has been instrumental in establishing a new mineral processing program in the Environmental Studies Department of University of North Carolina at Asheville (UNCA). This program, approved by the North Carolina General Administration in 2012, is the only mineral processing program in the region and is a collaboration between MRL and UNCA to enhance earth science education in the southeast. ■



Robert Mensah-Biney Carolinas Section hero.

SME Ph.D. and faculty career initiative

Accepting applications for academic grants

by Jackie Dorr, SME Communications Manager

The 2017 grant application period for the Ph.D. Fellowship and Academic Career Development grants is Dec. 1, 2016 through Jan. 31, 2017.

SME and the SME Foundation implemented the program in 2015 to address the long-term sustainability of U.S. mining engineering, mineral processing and extractive metallurgy academic degree programs and, particularly, the declining number of senior faculty members teaching those programs.

Multiple grants, ranging from \$60,000 to \$100,000, are awarded annually. The directives of the program are

- Career Development Grant — provides assistant or associate professors with the resources necessary to achieve promotion and tenure.
- Ph.D. Fellowship Grant — provides financial support to Ph.D. candidates with industry experience and a desire to pursue an academic career with the means of acquiring a doctoral degree.

For more information on the SME mining academic grant programs, please visit www.smenet.org/students/grants-scholarships. ■

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