



ENGINEERING GRADUATES & INDUSTRY DEMAND

How closely aligned are America's engineering colleges with economic trends? Part of the answer comes from a look at the manufacturing sector, which represents 12 percent of U.S. gross domestic product, according to the Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis. The accompanying graphic compares two decade-long trends: total job openings in U.S. manufacturing, as measured by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS); and ASEE's count of the number of bachelor's degrees awarded in industrial/manufacturing/systems engineering by all U.S. engineering schools. Both cover the period 2005 to 2014. The comparison isn't ideal, because BLS doesn't tabulate engineering-related job openings. Still, the data are revealing. They show that the number of job openings fluctuated more widely than the number of degrees awarded. In parallel with manufacturing industry's decline during the Great Recession (December 2007 to June 2009), the number of degrees awarded in industrial/manufacturing/systems also decreased but at a much slower rate. However, the latter number rebounded in 2008, much earlier than the end of the recession in 2009 when the manufacturing industry began to recover. Since the end of the recession, both the demand (job openings) and supply (degrees awarded) sides of the manufacturing labor market have trended upward at different rates, indicating that the supply side tends to be less sensitive to business cycles than the demand side.

