

# The Daily Pennsylvanian

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## OPINION

DAILY DIGITS  
20 Food-poisoning episodes linked to spinach or lettuce since 1995, according to the Food and Drug Administration

### THE SALAD STRIKES BACK | CEZARY PODKUL SEAS needs to shift focus

*Far too many Engineering graduates go on to take jobs on Wall Street and not for engineering companies*

Looking at Penn's undergraduate school rankings always brings up one sore outlier. While the overall University and the Wharton School consistently rank in the top 10 programs nationwide, this year the *U.S. News & World Report* ranked the School of Engineering and Applied Science at No. 29.

As Engineering School Dean Eduardo Glandt mentioned in his graduation speech this past May, improving the Engineering School's ranking is a top priority — not just for the school itself but also for Penn as a whole.

And rightly so.

But besides creating more opportunities for graduate and undergraduate research, adding more distinguished faculty and expanding its facilities, the Engineering School must address one key issue which is keeping its rankings artificially low: its reputation as an engineering school that trains engineers for Wall Street, not engineering.

It's easy to see how this reputation came about. Thanks to its many interdisciplinary programs and collaboration with Wharton, Penn Engineering has a very strong business flavor. Take a look at the Engineering School's graduate survey for 2005, and you'll find that the top employer for Engineering students was Goldman Sachs, with 10 employees from the 330-member class of 2005. Earlier surveys reveal a similar trend.

"It's a huge problem," 2006 Engineering alumnus John-Ross Cromer said, "because the business focus alters the mindset of the student body, and many students don't get the right encouragement

to become engineers." One side effect, Cromer explains, is that surprisingly few Engineering students take professional engineering exams in order to get certification as Engineers-In-Training.

But Penn is not alone. Many engineering schools face a similar brain-drain of engineers going into business-related fields rather than engineering. At MIT, for example, the top employer for 2005, with a head-count of 30, was McKinsey and Co., followed by a similar strand of financial-services firms that stand out as top engineering employers at Penn.

The reason for this is obvious. "Logical problem-solving skills are very sought-after and transferable to many different industries, and engineers are very good at developing those skills," Career Services Engineering School Associate Director Rosette Pyne said. Consequently, when the on-campus recruiting season comes around, many Engineering students find it easy to gain employment in a non-engineering-related field.

But while it is certainly expected that not everyone who studies engineering will want to become an engineer — in the same way that not everyone who goes to law school becomes a lawyer — it is crucial for the prestige of every professional school that it should have a large, strong core group of alumni in the area of its stated educational purpose. After all, no school wants to be a professional training ground for non-professionals.

And, to be fair, the Engineering School certainly has its share of alumni in engineering professions. "We have a great cross-



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section of engineering alumni across all industry segments," Pyne said.

But, given its small size, if a large chunk of Engineering students every year pursues careers in non-engineering fields, it limits the opportunity for the school's core alumni group to grow and become influential in the field. And that negatively impacts the school's peer assessment, which comprises 25 percent of the *U.S. News* ranking criteria. Consequently, this sort of brain-drain poses a more acute problem for a smaller engineering school like Penn's versus a larger one like MIT's.

"We want people who are leaders in the creation of technology, not just the management of technology," Glandt said. He added that the school must recruit "faculty who will infect the students with a passion for creative technology."

But while this is definitely a step in the right direction, debunking the engineers-for-Wall Street reputation will require a bolder tack. I recommend nothing short of a public-relations campaign. The Engineering School needs to convince more Engineering students that sticking with engineering as a profession is worth it — not only because the average 2005 salary for an Engineering grad was about \$2,000 higher than that of a Wharton grad, but because one cannot be a manager or business leader in the engineering field without having first been an engineer. And that means skipping Wall Street — as well as skipping ahead in the rankings.