

# BLACK GOLD WV

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## Alumni Update Winter 2011

PLEASE KEEP IN TOUCH! Send us your feedback. We want to know where life has taken you since you left West Virginia University. Complete and return this form with your news and comments. Also, pass this newsletter on, or let us know any alumni who are not receiving *Black Gold*.

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Brief News of Professional and Family Activities for Future Newsletters:

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# BLACK GOLD WV

DEPARTMENT OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS ENGINEERING

College of  
Engineering and  
Mineral Resources

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Winter 2011

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

As chair of the WVU Petroleum and Natural Gas Engineering (PNGE) Department, I would like to take a moment to reflect on 2010. Serving in this position is not something I take lightly. Rather, it is a privilege and an honor, and I consider it my pleasure to work hard every day with the goal of continually improving our Department.

Success within a university, better yet, a department, is not a one-person job. We rely on the dedication and resources of faculty, staff, alumni, donors, and students to make this Department great. It is an honor and a blessing to be a part of the PNGE Department, and I take great pride in what this Department represents.

The faculty of PNGE are extraordinary. We strive toward the excellence that our profession requires and deserves. The faculty's diverse educational background, enthusiasm, dedication, and empathy have provided the Department with requisite ingredients to maintain strong academic programs.

Understanding that there will be energy challenges ahead of us, we remain focused and confident that these challenges will be obtainable goals in our future. Natural gas is one of my passions, and I believe its resources hold great potential.

Our scholarship programs continue to blossom, allowing us to recruit a multitude of students from around the globe. Currently, our students hail from more than 15 countries in both the graduate and undergraduate programs. This diversity is crucial to the new global economy that students will face upon graduation.



**Sam Ameri**, *chair*

Our Department continues to emphasize research to help boost oil and natural gas production. With a world-renowned faculty, we aggressively and carefully recruit students of high caliber so we can continue high-quality research.

Numbers within the Department are continuing to rise, which is putting a strain on the amount of space available for classes. Major efforts have been put into upgrading our teaching and research facilities, laboratories, and equipment.

We continue to be grateful to our alumni and visiting committee for all they do for the Department, and we ask for their continued support. How PNGE is functioning as a whole is a true reflection of the efforts our alumni have put into our Department. Both alumni and advisory committee contributions allow us to build upon our current levels of excellence.

Sincerely,  
**Sam Ameri**  
*Professor and Chair*



(Top) Danielle Petrak coordinated the exhibit, which included old pictures of drilling bits used decades ago. (Bottom left) L to R: Benjamin Hardesty, Sam Ameri, and Royal Watts at the opening dedication. (Bottom right) Benjamin Hardesty, dedication speaker for the Museum, fall 2010 semester.



## Strengthening Our Roots: Watts Museum Exhibit Celebrates State's Oil Heritage

The Royce J. and Caroline B. Watts Museum recently displayed an exhibit entitled *Light/Lubricant/Liniment: The Early Years of Oil Production and Consumption in West Virginia, 1860-1900*.

The exhibition, which was open through October 31, focused on the development of West Virginia's oilfields following Edwin Drake's 1859 drilling of the first successful oil well in the United States. It also explored oil production usage in late-19th-century America. The objects featured in the exhibition were owned by the Watts Museum or on loan from other institutions and private collections.

Housed in the College, the Royce J. and Caroline B. Watts Museum is dedicated to preserving and promoting the social, cultural, and technological history of the coal, oil, and natural gas industries of West Virginia through the collection, preservation, research, and exhibition of objects relevant to these industries. The Museum is named in honor of Royce J. Watts, associate dean of the College, and his wife, Caroline, who have tirelessly supported its mission.

The Museum's permanent collection includes a wide selection of mining and drilling artifacts, including flame safety lamps, mine rescue equipment, canary cages, and model oil derricks. Books, archival documents, and a large collection of historical mining photographs are also included in its holdings.

Selections from the Museum's permanent collection are always on view, and several temporary exhibitions are displayed each year.

The Watts Museum is located in Room 125 of the Mineral Resources Building on the Evansdale Campus of West Virginia University. For additional information, or opportunities to donate or loan pieces to the museum, please contact **Danielle M. Petrak**, museum coordinator, at 304.293.4307 or [danielle.petrak@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:danielle.petrak@mail.wvu.edu).



## Ameri Appointed to ABET Board of Directors

Sam Ameri has been appointed to serve on the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) Board of Directors.

The ABET Board of Directors consists of a federation of 31 professional engineering and technical societies represented by 38 board members. Neither institutions nor individuals are members of ABET. The board meets on Saturdays in October and March.

ABET accreditation ensures that a college or university program meets the quality standards established by the profession for which it prepares its students. ABET continues to provide world leadership in assuring quality and in stimulating innovation in applied science, computing, engineering and technology education.



Sam Ameri, chair

## Recognition Banquets Celebrate Student, Faculty Success

The College celebrates students and faculty who have shown outstanding performance in their field each year with celebratory banquets. The first banquet held this year, on April 9, 2010, was specifically for the PNGE Department. Dr. H. Ilkin Bilgesu was recognized for the second year in a row as one of the College's outstanding professors and advisors.

The second banquet, which took place on April 11, 2010, included the entire College and recognized the outstanding graduate and undergraduate students in PNGE, as well as students from other departments. Students were recognized for their superior academic performance for 2009-2010. Sam Ameri was recognized as the Outstanding Professor of the PNGE Department for the fourth year in a row.



# Creating Leaders through the Society of Petroleum Engineers

The Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE) is an organization based on the core goals of energy resources development and production. Boasting a membership of more than 92,000, the SPE has dedicated its services to the oil and gas industry for more than 50 years.

Approximately 50 percent of SPE members live in the United States, and only a limited number of universities host a student chapter on their campus. WVU maintains a productive student chapter of SPE with about 60 members who meet on a regular basis.

"We pride ourselves on helping our fellow students within the petroleum classes and distributing information that the organizations provide for us," said Matthew Osborne, president of the WVU student chapter of SPE.

The WVU chapter plans and organizes functions, attends conferences, schedules short courses with speakers who are prominent in the field, coordinates field trips, and carries out many other projects.

Upcoming short course speakers will include representatives from international oil and

gas corporations. These will allow the SPE to raise money for the chapter. Recent field trips by the chapter have included a visit to a Marcellus Well frack job.

Most recently, WVU SPE hosted the Eastern Regional Technical Conference, held October 12-14, 2010. During the conference, many companies from the industry came to campus and set up booths promoting their organizations. These companies also took resumes from students to help with potential job placements.

These projects help to fulfill the core values of the SPE, which include: excellence, professionalism, volunteerism, innovation, and social responsibility.

"We would like to grow the SPE into a larger presence at WVU and increase our funds so that we can be more effective as a local chapter," Osborne said. "The responsibility of this role has made me more organized and professional and made me want to be a better student."



The chapter includes officers who are elected by their peer members. Those elected to office this year range from undergraduate to graduate students.

## **SPE Officers:**

Matthew Osborne, *president*

John Landis, *vice president*

Armel Mbakop, *secretary*

Jeremy Booker, *treasurer*

Abbas Belyadi, *industry representative*

Hossein Belyadi, *WVU SPE Chapter recruiter*

# Saudi Aramco Students Graduate

In April of this year, the graduating seniors from Saudi Aramco attended a dinner with their advisors and Chair Sam Ameri to celebrate their upcoming graduation.

"These students have performed extremely well, and I expect all of them to graduate with success," Ameri said. "They are outstanding students with excellent academic performances."

Over the past few years, the number of Saudi Aramco students studying petroleum and natural gas engineering at WVU has continued to increase due to the strong relationship the Department has with the company. Their high-caliber student base continues to drive our Department forward and is raising the bar for future PNGE students at WVU.



Graduating seniors from Saudi Aramco celebrated their accomplishments with their advisors and Sam and Betty Ameri at Sargasso Restaurant in May.



# Williams Shares Expertise with Students

Darrell Williams, a 1964 petroleum engineering graduate of WVU who has had an extremely successful career, came back to his alma mater in February of 2010 to deliver a lecture to students. His lecture was so captivating the department asked him to come back again. He returned to campus in October 2010 to a packed classroom of graduate students, and discussed the ins-and-outs of the oil fields. February 2011 has been discussed as another lecture date for his highly anticipated return.

"Our students greatly appreciate Darrell's willingness to give of his time and expertise and to share his experiences with them," said Sam Ameri, Department chair. "It is alumni such as Darrell who make us proud of the work that we do in the Department."

While a student at WVU, Williams served as president of Sigma Gamma Epsilon and Pi Epsilon Tau. Since graduation, he has accrued more than 30 years of international experience in the industry. He currently serves as an international business consultant through Williams and Associates, Inc., offering services on business strategies, SWOT facilitation, and organizational planning and market opportunities.

From 1993 until 2002, Williams was associated with the German firm of Deutag Drilling, where he was involved with both marketing and operations positions. In September 1996, he was transferred to Germany and served as managing director of Deutag International, a subsidiary that had responsibility for all drilling operations outside of Europe. Prior to joining Deutag, Williams was in senior executive positions with Nabors Drilling, Pool Company, Baker Oil Tools, and SEDCO. His earlier years were with Tenneco and Humble Oil (currently Exxon) as a drilling engineer and reservoir engineer.

Williams is past chair of the Houston Chapter of the International Association of Drilling Contractors (IADC), past member of the IADC



Darrell Williams gave a lecture to graduate students on off-shore drilling and leadership.

executive committee, past chair of the SPE/IADC annual drilling conference, a life member of the Society of Petroleum Engineers, and a registered professional engineer in Texas. He has published a number of technical papers and holds a patent on predicting pore pressures while drilling.

He has served as a director of SMDC (a Hydril subsidiary for deepwater drilling technology) and recently served as a director and audit committee member of Contango Oil and Gas Company (MCF- AMEX) and as a business advisor for a privately held oilfield manufacturing company. He is active as a board member of the Pearl Fincher Museum of Fine Arts in North Houston.

## Freshman Engineer Fest

The College annually hosts a festival for incoming freshmen. This year's event took place at the National Research Center for Coal and Energy, where each specialization and organization offered a booth with resources for the students.

Bingo was the theme, as the students circled from one booth to the next collecting a stamp from each of the 24 organizations represented. Pizza and refreshments were served. The event is a great way for freshmen general engineering majors to decide on a specific field of study, and possibly a future career.



PNGE students and upperclassmen answered questions about the Department and programs.

# Alumni Highlight: Alan Brannon/Richard Smith

**Alan Brannon** graduated cum laude with a bachelor of science degree in petroleum engineering from West Virginia University in 1983. He remained in West Virginia after graduation, taking a position as a production engineer for Consolidated Gas Supply Corporation (now Dominion Transmission, Inc.).

"Alan is an accomplished graduate of our Department who has always been a loyal and helpful friend to his alma mater and has contributed greatly to our state," said Department Chair Sam Ameri.

Brannon's roots in the state's oil and gas industry run deep, as his grandfather and uncles were involved in the early discoveries of the Oriskany Sandstone in West Virginia, and in other oil and gas work in the central part of the state.

As a production engineer, Brannon was responsible for well-reworking operations associated with gas storage and production field development, production enhancement operations, and plug and abandonment operations. He worked in several locations throughout West Virginia, from the southern part of the state to the Northern Panhandle. He rose to become a district superintendent responsible for managing well production, pipeline operation, maintenance budgets, and activities. He was also a project supervisor on pipeline relocations and maintenance operations.

After working in field operations as a district superintendent, Brannon was transferred back to the Clarksburg, W.Va., headquarters in 1993 to work as the superintendent of well operations. While in this position, he attended night classes at WVU and earned a master's degree in petroleum engineering in 1998.

In 2000 Brannon was elected to a three-year term as regional director of the Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE) Northeastern United States Region. During his tenure, he traveled to South America and the Middle East, and was recognized for promoting the society's mission within the industry for the betterment of the society. As part of these efforts, he was a member of the technical publications subcommittee, helped to implement the SPE.org web portal, and was involved in the adoption of the organization's new governance structure.

Brannon has been an active member of the SPE since 1980 and has been active in the local Northern West Virginia Region of the SPE for more than 15 years. He was the chair of the Northern West Virginia Section of the SPE from 1997-2000. He received SPE's Northeastern Regional Service Award in 2005. He has been a chair for the 2000 and 2005 SPE Eastern Regional meetings and is currently serving as the 2010 ERM co-chair and planning committee member.

Brannon also gives back to WVU and to our Department, serving as a member of the Petroleum Engineering Visiting Committee. He has been an adjunct faculty member since 2000, teaching a sophomore-level course, Introduction to Petroleum Engineering.

He is currently working on a doctorate in petroleum engineering while working as a gas storage engineer for Dominion Transmission, Inc. Some of his current responsibilities at Dominion are reservoir engineering and field liaison for several storage pools located in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York.

Brannon resides in Clarksburg, with his wife of nine years, Barbara, and their two children, Alexis and Jacob.



**Richard Smith**

**Richard K. Smith**, Northern Appalachian Region sales manager for Superior Well Services, has been recognized as the 2010 Outstanding Alumni of the Year, presented by the WVU Mineral Resources Alumni Chapter. Smith, who received both his undergraduate and graduate degrees from WVU, has more than 30 years experience in the industry.

Smith began his career in 1981 with Halliburton Services as a field engineer in Elkview, W.Va. After being promoted to district engineer he was relocated to Houston, Tex.,

where he was on special assignment with Mobil Oil as a technical advisor. Smith was responsible for a \$30 million operating budget and the facility was selected as Mobil's best operating non-core unit.

Smith moved to South East Asia in 1995 as an in-house engineer for the Royal Dutch Shell Company operating in Brunei. He was assigned to Shell's Department of Reservoir Operations, which was responsible for selecting, developing, and writing production enhancement programs for Brunei Shell Petroleum Offshore Production Support Vessel Campaign.

In 1997, he was promoted to country manager for Brunei Shell and assumed authority for all business development, operations, and financial performance for a 120-person, \$50 million annual budget business location covering the countries of Brunei, Philippines, and East Malaysia. Smith transferred back to Weston, W.Va., in 2000, to lead the business development program for Team No. Three Area, which includes the states of West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee.

Prior to joining Superior Well Services, Smith was Northeast Operations Manager for Weatherford Fracturing Technologies from 2006 to 2010. He was responsible for locations in Buckhannon, Charleston and Williamson, W.Va.



LEAVE A LEGACY®

## Make a Difference in the Lives That Follow

No one who has the slightest level of knowledge about the energy industry doubts the great impact that petroleum and natural gas engineers have on our daily lives in this country and around the world. Marcellus shale reserves are certainly on many people's minds.

Supporting the future of the petroleum and natural gas engineering program at WVU is a smart way to ensure the continuation of our society's exciting record of progress. An easy option is to provide such support through a gift provision included in a will or revocable trust.

The wording of "to the West Virginia University Foundation, Inc. to benefit the College of Engineering and Mineral Resources' Department of Petroleum and Natural Gas Engineering," will provide such a special gift. Directing your support to any of the Department's highest priorities—scholarships, laboratory equipment for teaching and research, faculty professional development, and endowed professorships—would be appreciated.

Another option to consider in helping the Department grow in the years ahead is a gift that pays income to you and your spouse for life. The payout can be a fixed amount or can be variable with the potential to grow over the years. A current tax deduction is earned from the gift and using appreciated assets (stocks, bonds, mutual funds, or even real estate) avoids immediate capital gains taxes on the growth in the assets' value. When the payout ends, the remaining fund will benefit the Department as you specify.

If you'd like to learn more about these smart choices, contact **Dawn Sandone**, director of development, at (304) 293-4036 or [Dawn.Sandone@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:Dawn.Sandone@mail.wvu.edu). Making sure that future petroleum and natural gas engineers receive a valuable education at WVU is something to cheer about.

## A Thank You to our Friends

Department Chair Sam Ameri, faculty, staff, and students of the WVU Department of Petroleum and Natural Gas Engineering would like to express our utmost gratitude to friends and alumni for their continued donations to the Department. Your generous contributions have facilitated the purchase of many important pieces of equipment, which help provide exciting and innovative educational opportunities for our students. With contributions from our Visiting Committee, we have been able to upgrade our graduate student offices, providing a much better working and learning environment for these students.

Recent contributions also have helped to create an endowed fund to support research in Appalachian shales. This fund will advance our Department's energy-related research and is eligible for matching funds from the West Virginia Research Trust Fund (Bucks for Brains), stretching these research dollars even further.

Simply put, without support from our alumni and friends, our Department would not be where it is today. We could not be more appreciative for all contributions, large and small, and we would like to extend a sincere thank you to those who have been so kind this year and in years past. You keep us running smoothly!



Sam Ameri met with some of the Department's recent alumni at the SPE Eastern Regional Conference.