

## EME faculty member completes Administrative Fellowship

Over the past year Dr. Zuleima Karpyn, professor of petroleum and natural gas engineering, shadowed Executive Vice President and Provost Nicholas Jones during meetings, appearances around campus and interactions with members of the Penn State community as part of the Administrative Fellows Program.

“This opportunity is really an opportunity for me to gain access to spaces--meetings, conversations--that relate to the leadership and the University,” she said. “The program’s goal was to open up the doors for me to really experience what it is to be part of high level administration and learn from those experiences.”

Each year a small number of faculty or staff members are selected and paired with a member of the University’s administration to participate in a year-long mentorship. Throughout the program Karpyn said she gained an understanding and appreciation for the range of responsibilities the Provost handles.

“Not only seeing the types of situations he needs to handle and the breadth of functions that he covers, but at the same time to get a window of observation for how he maneuvers it,” Karpyn said. “Not only what he’s exposed to, but how he deals with it on a daily basis.”

Those experiences included complete access to Jones’ and Vice President for Faculty Affairs Kathleen Bieschke’s calendars which provided Karpyn options for each day. Along with core meetings with Jones’ staff and academic leadership groups around campus, Karpyn observed interactions with all members of the Penn State community.

Outside of providing her opinion as a faculty member in small meetings, Karpyn maintained an observation role. However, she was able to take an active role in multiple campus groups including the planning committee for the Penn State Forum Speaker Series, the selection committee for next year’s fellows, and serving as a faculty representative on search committees for positions around University Park.

Additionally, as the Administrative Fellow, Karpyn joined the Big 10 Academic Alliance leadership program that brings together five fellows from each of the Big 10 universities through digital and in-person activities and conferences.

“I think that brings another layer of perspective of higher ed beyond my discipline, beyond my college, beyond Penn State, and now at the Big 10 community,” Karpyn said about meeting and learning from other Big 10 fellows. “That really expands your perspective of what it means to serve in higher education and the purpose of higher education.”

The range of meetings and packed schedule led Karpyn to appreciate Jones' ability to understand complex problems or groups and create a solution or new policy.

"I think the only way you can cover that much range of responsibilities is that you have to be very effective at getting to the heart of every conversation," Karpyn said, adding she had not previously recognized Jones' skill to effectively grasp the details of an issue and commitment to understanding all University groups.

"It struck me in my first meeting with the Council of Academic Deans how much thought, care, and effort is put into every little decision that percolates down to where we are as faculty," she said. "Often times that thought process and analysis that led to every single decision doesn't percolate down and I think that's a problem leadership recognizes."

Karpyn views that communication problem as an opportunity for her to build a bridge between the thought process behind University leadership's decisions and her fellow faculty and staff members' understanding of those decisions. She said the allocation of resources and how to address inequities within a constrained budget is "a constant battle" that requires clear communication.

"Even the process of saying, 'We want to invest in this idea with our money and our effort' can create inequities. Strategically that could be a really good idea but from a leadership perspective that needs to be carefully balanced," Karpyn said. "I think that understand balance from a leadership and communication standpoint can be difficult but also understanding those who are affected by the decline in resources is challenging."

To effectively learn those skills Karpyn experienced a full immersion in University administration which included a separation from her academic unit, teaching unit, and temporarily stepping down from her position as the chair for the Petroleum and Natural Gas Program.

"The main definition of what it means to be a faculty member was completely redefined for me this year. And I think doing that allowed me to experience, at least for one year, a different professional identity within Penn State," she said. "I was still a faculty member, but this year I saw Penn State through a completely different lens."

Karpyn attributed her successful immersion in the program to the support from those around her.

"Everyone around me—my graduate students, the office of the provost, Dean Lee Kump, my department head Sanjay Srinivasan, my husband professor of petroleum and natural gas

engineering Luis Ayala H.—they all really contributed in whatever way they could support me to have this experience at its fullest,” she said, adding that the flexibility and understanding of her graduate students was especially helpful.

Her time away from teaching allowed Karpyn to learn more about other Penn State campuses and how to better serve students who may transfer from other campuses to University Park.

“Experiencing them, at least for a day, really enriches that perspective that they are different,” Karpyn said about her trip with Jones’ to every campus this spring. “The population they serve, infrastructure they have, and geographical differences all create a different emphasis for each of them.”

Those lessons and others are what Karpyn believes will enhance her work as she returns to her regular teaching and researching load this fall. Karpyn was one of only three Fellows selected for the 2018-19 academic year and saw this opportunity as a chance to build on previous administrative experiences.

“I’ve enjoyed trying to manage the work capacity that we have at the University and working at different levels with students,” she said referencing past work managing faculty and staff resources as the EMS Energy Institute’s interim director in 2013-14 and as the program chair for the Petroleum and Natural Gas Engineering Program earlier this year. Those experiences were “very fulfilling” and peaked her interest to learn more about administrative work within the University.

“I think understanding that would allow me to be a better translator to my department,” she said. “Coming back with that information, it’s not only something I carry to serve my own tasks but something I use to translate why certain policies are in place, where you can find a piece of information.”

Karpyn developed new goals for the Petroleum and Natural Gas Program including committing to student success on every campus by reaching out to all students in the program to ensure they are aware of and prepared for careers paths in the field. She also hopes to continue working with Bieschke to help Penn State hire, retain, train, and support women in STEM.

Participation in the Administrative Fellows Program does not guarantee or require future appointments in the University’s administration, but it does provide faculty or staff members including Karpyn with valuable skills to use throughout a university career.

“It’s also an opportunity to build skills in terms of leadership in administration,” Karpyn said. “It’s really a great faculty development opportunity. Whether I continue to pursue a path in administration or not, it would still make me that much more effective and give me a greater appreciation of how the University functions.”

Karpyn encourages all faculty and staff members to consider applying for an Administrative Fellowship. To learn more about the program, visit [vpfa.psu.edu/administrative-fellows](http://vpfa.psu.edu/administrative-fellows).