



Celebrate Black Energy Awareness Month (BEAM) with the American Association of Blacks in Energy.

Welcome to our special spotlight on the important Black Energy Awareness Month, also known as BEAM. From heating up your home, to preparing for homework and dinner each night, we continue to be surrounded by numerous sources of energy. Fuel for our cars, kinetic energy for our daily lives, it all works together.

Each year, in communities around the country, our national chapters celebrate the great contributions of minorities, students and professionals and discuss the important role energy plays in our daily lives.

During the month of October, we invite you to stop by our site often and see candid feature PROFILES, get the SKINNY on key TIPS about the business, and FACTS about the DYNAMIC world of – ENERGY AWARENESS – what we believe is a driving economic force in our communities all over the country, impacting the world.

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AABE Scholars

Profiles of Scholars



AABE Gator Chapter Founder **Conrad Cole** is not only a rising leader within AABE, he's an energy scholar with an impressive resume. The Sierra Leone native displayed a love for learning complex and abstract concepts at an early age. Today he's using that passion to fuel his future as an energy professional and one of many up and coming minority leaders within the field.

"Being involved with AABE has provided me the opportunity to network with industry professionals while serving on the Florida chapter scholarship committee," Cole said. "As a graduate student I was also driven to create a collegiate chapter at the University of Florida with support from the AABE Florida chapter's executive committee."

Cole says the AABE Gator Chapter will be an invaluable resource for those interested in starting energy careers. "The new AABE Gator Chapter will serve as a channel through which undergraduates can find their niche in the energy industry and become properly equipped for successful careers prior to graduation," Cole said.

In addition to building upon the AABE legacy, Cole is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Florida. He holds a B.S. and M.S. in mechanical engineering. Conrad's short-term goal is to secure a postdoctoral research position and his long-term goal is to become a university professor or a scientist at a DOE national laboratory. Cole also dreams of establishing a school or STEM education program in his homeland of Sierra Leone to contribute to raising the standard of living for its people.



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Walter Roper:

Being involved with AABE has allowed me to be connected to a community of people who actually care about black students who have a strong career interest. By providing information about energy issues, research and development it has allowed me to really see how I want to make my contribution to the field. In addition the AABE scholarship helped support me financially when paying for college. This allowed me to attend a highly ranked school and receive the best education possible.

1. What are your career interests in the energy sector and why?

I plan to major in engineering and obtain a degree in Chemical Engineering in order to work with these new fuel systems. This would allow me to experiment with the possibilities of unconventional energy sources as well as work to make them viable in engines for everyday use. The rising issues of global warming and depletion of fossil fuels pushes the world towards renewable energy, and towards new devices that can efficiently transform the alternative fuels into the energy we need.

2. How has your involvement with AABE prepared you for your future in the energy sector?

My involvement with AABE prepared me for a future in the energy sector by giving me a generous scholarship in order to begin paying my tuition to Stanford University in the heart of Silicon Valley. This school is rated by U.S News as the 2nd best Engineering School in the U.S. With a chemical engineering degree from Stanford, I can begin to work on the fuel systems to improve energy efficiency in everyday mechanics.



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David Moody lives in Cincinnati, Ohio and received an AABE Scholarship in April 2014.

Being involved with AABE has piqued a strong interest in the energy industry and has confirmed my resilient desire to pursue a career related to engineering.

1. What are your career interests in the energy sector and why?

I aspire to work in the energy sector as an engineer for a Fortune 500 corporation, because I have plans to make my mark on history by innovating the consumption and generating of energy and its uses.

2. How has your involvement with AABE prepared you for your future in the energy sector?

AABE generated my educational career through the scholarship, which allowed me to attend the University of Michigan. The scholarship also aided in national recognition with professionals in the energy sector. Through meeting international and national professionals in the energy sector, I have been fortunate to learn from their experiences; thus make wiser decisions through their guidance.



AABE Professional Spotlight



Kusum Kavia, President

Combustion Associates, Inc.

At the helm of Combustion Associates, Inc., Kusum Kavia is committed to passionately carrying out her duties as president. But at the beginning of her energy career, she wasn't aware of how much time is invested in energy projects.

“From the analysis of an RFQ or tender to the completion of the power plant, energy projects have some of the longest lead times in our industry,” Kavia said. The design, drafting, engineering, procurement and construction of a project normally takes years to complete. Every single pipe, valve, instrument and piece of equipment is thoroughly analyzed in order to meet quality standards and client requirements.”

And while she admits that time is the greatest investment, she added that the time commitment leads to quality output and staying power in the industry.

“The amount of time is often the greatest investment for a company constructing power generation equipment, however, the investment of this time often proves to be extremely rewarding,” she said.

Today Kavia uses her expertise to tackle the poor energy infrastructure throughout Eastern and Western Africa and has passionately sought to fix the problem. After years of planning and engineering, her firm constructed their very first power generation plant in the Republic of Benin. And throughout her successful career, the one thing she never lacks is patience. “There will be many times when projects are delayed, clients change their minds, or equipment schedules are behind,” Kavia said. “Having patience in dealing with these problems is one of the keys to keep these projects moving and becoming success stories.”



AABE Professional Spotlight



Marie Knox, Advisor at MISO, Carmel, Indiana

“I wish I was aware of AABE at the start of my energy career,” said Knox, Advisor, at MISO in Carmel, Indiana. AABE provides a network of energy professionals that have years of energy experience and who understand the challenges that one may face day-to-day in this business. AABE provides mentors that not only help develop young professionals, but also can be relied upon as a quality sounding board for wisdom and advice. Having access to these resources has helped me be more strategic in how I do business. I have been in the energy industry for 11 years, to have the organization as a resource early in my career would have been helpful in me advancing in my career sooner.

Were you exposed to the possibilities in energy before you entered the field?

No, I had not been exposed to the energy industry before entering the field. I completed an internship in high-school for a government agency where I worked with engineers, however it was never mentored or explained to me the opportunities in engineering careers.

After college, an acquaintance at the local electric company noticed I was a college graduate seeking employment and recommended I apply for the local Call Center, where customers call to handle their electric service. After interviewing, the management team acknowledged that I would fit better in the company’s “control center” where the generation plants were dispatched, and transmission was scheduled and dispatched.

With the opportunity to learn a business that was new and dynamic, I latched on and have been intrigued ever since. I now volunteer and speak at elementary schools to young girls for Girls Inc. and to high school students about the various opportunities in the energy industry and with STEM education.

What college courses would you recommend for those interested in going into the industry?

I find math to be critical. Even now my North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) certification requires that I know



AABE Professional Spotlight

Marie Knox

how to complete Geometry and Trigonometry to calculate voltage and phase angles in the event the computer systems that manage our energy management system fail. I started pre-algebra in the 7th and 8th grades. Followed by Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry, and Calculus. The sooner a student progresses in math and understands the basic concepts for each math subject, it makes it easier to understand more challenging concepts that they may experience when learning about the electric grid and how it functions. I recommend college students enroll in advanced math courses as well as other courses that fall under the STEM curriculum. Such courses will increase your analytical and problem solving skills.

What interpersonal skills do you feel are crucial to having a successful career in energy?

Communicating well is important in being successful in any career requiring you to work with others as a team. The energy industry at times seems like one large extended family where many are well connected, in theory having six degrees of separation.

As an energy professional, what program/initiatives are you involved in to reach out to other diverse professionals to spark their interests in careers in energy?

When the opportunities arise I connect with the local National Black MBA Association and the local National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE). When there are events locally in my area I partner with these organizations and utilize opportunities to promote the AABE mission and the benefits of membership.



AABE Professional Spotlight



Mrs. Velda Otey, VP and CIO American Electric Company, Retired

American Electric Power Retired Vice President and Chief Information Officer, Velda Otey said she wished she had known at the beginning of her career about the energy profession. “My only exposure coming into the energy business was to pay the utility bill on time,” Otey said matter of fact. “I did recognize the importance of energy to the sustainability of modern living, specifically in the areas of health, comfort, commerce and even entertainment.

When Mrs. Otey entered the industry there were no organizations around like the AABE, but she wished there had been. “I was fortunate enough to have a mentor early in my career that saw the importance of exposing me to other areas of the company,” she said.

This led to the development and understanding that to be effective in your career it was necessary to love all aspects of your company and industry. In a young person’s path to acquiring employment in the energy industry both classes in science, technology, engineering and mathematics and also business would be a very advantageous foundation.

Mrs. Otey divulged several crucial interpersonal skills that would be very important to the ones success in their career in energy. They are listening, inquiry, communication, conflict resolution and also humor.

“The ability to manage your own emotions and the emotions of others or, emotional intelligence, is also crucial in the success of anyone in this field,” In order to pass on experience and help motivate others to become interested in careers in energy Mrs. Otey maintains membership in a women’s leadership development organization and she also speaks at many career programs. These have allowed her to develop a network of relationships with women and minorities in all industries and expose them to opportunities in the energy field.



AABE Professional Spotlight



Alexander Stanley, Virginia AABE Chapter
Dominion Generation, Senior Operations Instructor (Nuclear)
Surry Nuclear Generating Facility

Being involved with AABE has allowed me the opportunity to have gain perspectives that I probably would not have benefited from otherwise. The talent pool is enormous among all groups in Dominion, and I am honored to have the opportunity of experiencing this positive visual as I do business on a daily basis.

Although my natural talents rest in the area of communications, building relationships, and affecting positive change. Energy affects everyone, thus, having a career in the energy sector surpasses all. Stanley wished he had professional development and the concepts of mentorship and progression when he began his career. He said he was not initially exposed to AABE.

“I learned about the possibilities of the energy sector subsequent to acquiring a supplemental employee position at the Surry Nuclear Generating facility right out of high school. My individual curiosity was the vehicle that led me to explore the possibilities and ultimately quenched my thirst for knowledge and to excel. My thirst for knowledge has led to a career as a nuclear professional spanning over 35-years,” he explained.

When asked about his involved with AABE and how it prepared him for his future in the energy sector? He said AABE’s involvement has and continues to enrich my broad knowledge of the vast energy sector. The recent completion of my engineering degree was motivated in part by my involvement with AABE. My expertise originally was in the nuclear sector; however, my involvement with AABE has given me the opportunity of energy knowledge diversity, and is an extension of my professional development whereby I am continuously pursuing excellence.

Dominion is a large company with a portfolio that contains a diverse energy mix. For this reason, the opportunities are endless. The exposure that I have personally experienced through AABE with executive leaders in Dominion and abroad has and continues to be invaluable.

Lastly, he recommended students entering the industry should study engineering, alternative energy, renewable energy, and business/corporate law.



AABE Professional Spotlight



Jerome Myers, Project Engineering Manager – CH2M Hill

At the beginning of his career as an engineer, Jerome Myers admits that he wishes he had been more knowledgeable about what was possible in the energy field.

“I had no idea of all the different avenues there were for someone like me,” said Myers who serves as Project Engineering Manager for CH2M Hill. “My view of the opportunities was limited to my surroundings and I had no idea that there were people who were traveling around the country and the world helping solve energy related issues.”

He noted that the Global dependence on the industry further illustrates just how much is possible for those interested in pursuing an energy career.

“The transition from energy being a want to a necessary resource for life as we know it gives me confidence that while the industry may change for the foreseeable future those working in Energy will shape the face of our planet,” Myers said. In addition to learning more about the industry, Myers credits his long-term success in the field of energy to effective communication. He says energy professionals interact with a large number of people in their roles and that requires being equipped to effectively communicate.

“The sector touches so many people and those who are able to explain what we do and why we do it are positioned to help advance the missions of various organizations,” Myers said. “Additionally these talents are required for leading the teams that will be solving the challenges facing the world related to energy.”



AABE Professional Spotlight



Melanie Littlejohn lives in North Syracuse, NY and works for Consolidated Edison

1. What is the one thing you wish you had been aware of in the beginning of your energy career?

In the beginning of my energy career, my thinking and experience was limited. I wish I knew how diverse and enormous the energy field was, as it relates to career opportunities.

2. Were you exposed to the possibilities in energy before you entered the field, if so how did you learn about them?

Initially, I was not exposed to energy careers. Upon graduating from college my thinking toward the utility sector was “its not the exciting forward thinking” industry. I was certain it was the basic pipes and wire of a company. However, my thinking was expanded and I was able to learn about it’s evolving landscape, innovative ways and how the sector aids in customer management of energy consumption.

3. What college courses would you recommend for those interested in this sector?

I would recommend a student interested in the sector to take courses in the following: Finance, Accounting, Engineering, Environmental Studies, Renewable Technology and Cross Cultural Communications.

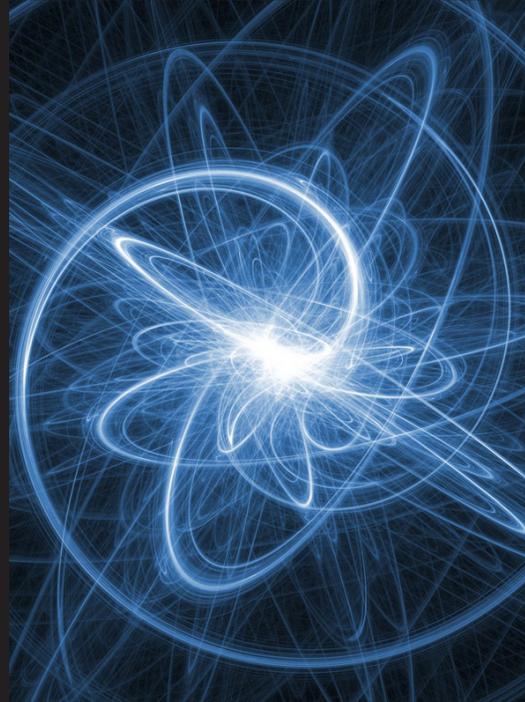
4. What interpersonal skills do you find are crucial to be successful in the career of energy?

Skills crucial to survive in any career, is communication, both oral and written. Obtaining the abilities to listen fully and critically, adjust to change and dynamic time, and engage stakeholders to resolve and manage their business and homes are effective to any field; especially energy.

5. As an energy professional, what programs or initiatives are you involved in to include other diverse professionals to spark their interests in careers in energy?

I am interested in engaging with students across New York State. I desire to broaden his or her thinking to the varied and exciting possibilities in the utility space. Currently, I speak to students from the Boys & Girls Clubs, Neighborhood Community Centers to College Campus across the region. I see this as paramount to developing the workforce of the future! Its an exciting time to be in this industry.

AABE 37th Anniversary



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