

Three New Mexico Tech Students Garner Statewide Engineering Awards

By Thomas Guengerich

SOCORRO, N.M., Feb. 12, 2009 – The New Mexico Society of Professional Engineers will honor three New Mexico Tech students with statewide engineering awards at the Society’s annual banquet Friday, Feb. 13, in Albuquerque.

Kyle Chavez, a mechanical engineering senior, will receive the top prize as Engineering Student of the Year. The two runners-up are Assiya Bekniyazova, a graduate student in petroleum engineering and Philip Heid, a senior in civil engineering.

The three students and their nominating professors have been invited to attend the banquet, where they will be recognized by the statewide membership of the Society. The group will also honor top students from the University of New Mexico, as well as announce the statewide awards for professional engineers.

“These award winners are not only excellent academically, but they have shown a track record of contributing to their programs,” said Dr. Peter Gerity, Tech vice president of academic affairs. “These are outstanding students.”

A key benchmark for award winners is their contribution to the field of engineering outside of the classroom. Each of the winners has been involved in notable engineering projects.



Assiya Bekniyazova

A native of Kazakhstan, Bekniyazova earned a bachelor’s of industrial economics from the Kazakh National University of Technology in Aktobe in 2006. She then earned a bachelor’s in petroleum engineering from New Mexico Tech in December 2008. She is scheduled to earn a master’s in petroleum engineering, also from Tech, later this year.

Bekniyazova has distinguished herself by working on a research project with Shell Oil to diagnose stress-sensitive permeability in a tight gas reservoir.

She spends part of her time in Shell's Calgary office working directly with their engineering group. Previously, she worked for Kazakh Oil Aktobe, assisting on an engineering project to increase the capacity of a central processing facility.

Petroleum engineering professor Dr. Tom Engler nominated Bekniyazova based on her academic performance, leadership and initiative.

“As an exceptional undergraduate, she is one of a few whom I allowed in my graduate-level Gas Reservoir Management course,” Engler said. “Her work is not one of the best; it is the best I have seen in years. She is insightful, inquisitive and knowledgeable, frequently investigating a topic or reviewing literature on her own prior to coming to me for further discussion and/or clarification.”

Assiya is active in several community projects, volunteering for fundraising and being a member of a variety of professional societies.

“She organizes meetings, field trips and conferences,” Engler said. “Without her nothing would get done.”



Congratulations to Our Engineering Students of the Year

Kyle Chavez (second from left) was named the 2009 New Mexico Tech Engineering Student of the Year; Assiya Bekniyazova (above) and Philip Heid (not pictured) were the two runners-up. The contingent from the Socorro university were guests of the New Mexico Society of Professional Engineers (NMSPE) at a luncheon in Albuquerque on Feb. 13. Flanking the students are, from left, Dr. Warren Ostergren, who nominated Chavez; Dr. Peter F. Gerity, Vice President for Academic Affairs and a Professor of Mechanical Engineering; and Dr. Tom Engler, who nominated Bekniyazova.