

Navigating the Energy Transition in the Gulf of Mexico

Committee

Latonia V. Batiste

Member

Latonia Viverette-Batiste is an Environmental Scientist by education and training and has worked in the industry for over 25 years. She works at WSP as a Project Director in the Sustainability, Energy and Climate Change division. She has worked as a Lead Environmental Scientist and Energy Project Manager conducting sustainability and ESG research and reporting and leading environmental reviews efforts for renewable energy and communications projects for higher education, construction and energy industries. This social-entrepreneur has held roles in environmental/sustainability program management for Fortune 500 companies and the Federal Government.

Dr. Viverette-Batiste began her Environmental Justice career developing methods to measure lead in the soil at playgrounds of underserved populations in the inner City of New Orleans. Viverette-Batiste has a PhD from Jackson State University (Dissertation topic: Environmental Sustainability), a MSPH from Tulane University (Environmental Science), BS in Biology from Xavier University of LA. She serves two roles with Gulf Research Program of The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine: Board Member, Gulf Offshore Energy Safety (GOES) and Committee Chairperson for the Gulf Scholars Research Program for the Board on Gulf Education and Engagement.

She is the 2016, Founding Director of Sustainability and Energy Efficiency at Xavier University of LA as well as the 2020 Founding Director of a start-up collaborative created to develop tools for climate literacy and mentoring for BIPOC communities. The collaborative is primarily composed of female Sustainability Scientists, graduates of HBCUs, with a passion to empower and GREEN the BIPOC community. She has numerous professional affiliations and serves as a local and national Board member volunteer for several organizations.

Thomas F. Degnan, Jr.

Member

Tom Degnan is the Anthony and Sarah Earley Professor of Energy and the Environment (Emeritus) in the Department of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering of the University of Notre Dame. He was previously Manager, Breakthrough Technology for ExxonMobil Research and Engineering until his retirement from ExxonMobil in September 2014. His career with ExxonMobil, mainly in the refining and chemical businesses spanned 34 years. Prior to joining ExxonMobil, he worked for 3M Company in 3M's Central Research Laboratories, researching new radiation technologies for polymer processing. He is the recipient of a number of awards from the American Chemical Society, the American Institute of Chemical Engineers and the North American Catalysis Society for his contributions to developing new chemical and fuels processing technologies. Tom is a Fellow of the AIChE and a member of the Board of Directors of the North American Catalysis Society. In recognition of his development of improved, environmentally advantaged chemical processes, Tom was elected to the National Academy of Engineering in 2013. He is currently a member of NAE President's Business Advisory Committee (PBAC).

Sara N. Ortwein

Member

Sara Ortwein retired from ExxonMobil in March 2019. Prior to retiring, she was president of XTO Energy, a subsidiary of ExxonMobil, from November 2016 through February 2019 and was responsible for ExxonMobil's unconventional oil and gas business. Ms. Ortwein earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering at the University of Texas at Austin before joining Exxon Company USA in 1980 as a drilling engineer. She held numerous technical and managerial positions throughout her career. In 2001, she became a corporate upstream advisor to senior management at ExxonMobil headquarters in Irving, TX. Three years later, she was named production manager responsible for ExxonMobil's operated U.S. production operations. Sara was named vice president of engineering for ExxonMobil Development Company in 2006 where she was responsible for engineering design for major projects around the world. She served as president of ExxonMobil Upstream Research Company from September 2010 until November 2016, where she was responsible for research and technology development and application for ExxonMobil's Upstream business. In 2020, Ms. Ortwein was elected to the National Academy of Engineering. She currently serves on the Board of Directors of The Texas Academy of Medicine, Engineering, Science and Technology. She is past chair of the University of Texas Engineering Advisory Board and currently serves on the Executive Committee. In late 2020, she joined the Board of Directors of Sanara Medtech.

Francis Wiese

Member

Dr. Francis Wiese serves as Stantec's Science Director for Climate Solutions and brings almost 30 years of experience working on marine and climate related issues around the world. Francis joined Stantec in August 2013 to lead their marine science practice after serving as the Science Director for the North Pacific Research Board in Alaska for 8 years. In that position, he designed, implemented, and managed large multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional marine ecosystems programs, and set annual research priorities to address pressing fisheries management and marine ecosystem needs. In addition to his diverse disciplinary background, he has vast international knowledge, having lived and worked in eight different countries on four continents. Throughout his career, Francis has extensively focused on climate change and other anthropogenic stressors on the environment, system science, adaptive management, resilience, environmental policy, and innovation. Dr. Wiese has worked for and with academia, government, non-profits, and industry and believes that we are better together, taking inclusive approaches and fostering partnerships across non-traditional lines. He is a technical reviewer for over 20 international journals and serves on a variety of national and international committees, science panels, and working groups, including as chair of the Understanding Gulf Ocean Systems (UGOS), and member of the Gulf Research Program Division Committee. Dr. Wiese received his B.S. in marine biology from the University of Victoria and Ph.D. in conservation and marine biology from Memorial University of Newfoundland.