

**The University of Houston Friends of Women's Studies present
The Barbara Karkabi Living Archives Series
Women in Energy
January 26, 2015**

Panel Biographies



Decie Autin

Upstream Synergies Manager, ExxonMobil Development Company

Decie is currently working across the ExxonMobil Upstream companies to identify and capture synergy opportunities that result from being co-located at the new Houston campus.

Prior to this role, she held the position of Project Executive for the PNG LNG Project. Decie was responsible for planning, development and execution of all aspects of the \$19B Project, commercializing natural gas resources in Papua New Guinea. The project was successfully started-up several months ahead of schedule in May

2014.

Decie has been with ExxonMobil for over 30 years since graduating from Georgia Tech with a BChE. She began her career in New Orleans in the offshore facilities surveillance team and moved within the organisation in facilities and mechanical engineering management, natural gas and gas liquids marketing, Continuous Improvement Advisor and Operations Superintendent.

After 15 years in New Orleans, Decie moved to Houston into the Natural Gas Planning organisation. Decie began working on major projects in 1998 and has held project management positions on Hoover-Diana (Gulf of Mexico), Thunder Horse (Operated by Others – Gulf of Mexico) and Erha (Offshore Nigeria).

Decie is married with 2 children and 3 step-children. She enjoys traveling and birdwatching.



Nisha Desai

Vice President, NRG Distributed Generation

Nisha is responsible for the strategy, origination, and development activities for NRG Distributed Generation, a business unit of NRG Energy, Inc. She heads a team of project development and engineering professionals that identify and create resilient and sustainable on-site energy solutions for commercial, industrial and institutional clients. Prior to NRG, Nisha had a number of leadership roles in the energy and water industries, with a significant focus on business model and technology innovation in a number of startup situations. She cofounding a business intelligence startup serving the solar power sector, and her company ActualSun was selected to be

part of the launch class of SURGE. Previous startups she worked with were creating new markets for solar power, water infrastructure, energy storage, and other related technologies. In

addition to her startup experience, Nisha has served several years as a management consultant with Booz & Company's energy practice, and she has also held finance and business development roles with Enron and Mobil.

She holds an economics degree from Yale and an MBA from Harvard Business School, where she was an American Association of University Women Selected Professions Fellow. In her personal life, Nisha enjoys spending quality time (what little there is!) with her two kids, while also serving on the Board of Directors of the Yale Club of Houston.



Sue Payne

Sue Payne recently retired from Exxon Mobil Corporation after a 37-year career in global oil and gas exploration, development and production. After starting her career as a geophysicist in Mobil's technology center in Dallas Texas, she served in many diverse professional and management roles. As an executive, she held positions in Mobil Oil as an advisor in Mobil's headquarters in New York and Fairfax, as South American Business Development Manager and as Vice President of US Onshore Exploration and Production. Following the merger of Exxon and Mobil in 2000, she served as Geoscience Manager for ExxonMobil Production, as US Exploration Manager, as Global Exploration Planning Manager and finally as Manager of Global Geoscience.

From 2011 to 2013, Sue was the Chief Operating Officer for the National Math and Science Initiative, a national non-profit focused on improving the math and science educational performance in US schools.

Sue is a native of Hickory Flat, Georgia and a 1975 graduate of Georgia Institute of Technology. She currently resides in Houston, Texas where she is active in many non-profit organizations, currently serving on the board of the United Way of Greater Houston, the education committee of Houston Children's Museum, the STEM committee of the Greater Houston Partnership and the advisory board for the College of Science at Georgia Tech.



Cynthia L. Walker

**Executive Vice President, Strategy and Development
Occidental Petroleum Corporation**

Cynthia L. Walker is Executive Vice President, Strategy and Development, Occidental Petroleum Corporation, an international oil and gas exploration and production company, and one of the largest U.S. oil and gas companies based on equity market capitalization. In this capacity, Cynthia leads Corporate Development, Strategic Planning and Analysis and the Land organization.

Cynthia joined Occidental in 2012 and served as Executive Vice President, Chief Financial Officer, with responsibility for the company's overall finance function, including Controller, Tax, Treasury, Internal Audit as well as Strategic Planning and Analysis.

Prior to Occidental, Cynthia was at Goldman, Sachs & Co. for 12 years, most recently as Managing Director. At Goldman Sachs, she provided clients with strategic advice in high-profile energy industry transactions as a senior member of the Global Natural Resources Group in Houston. She also was a member of the Mergers and Acquisitions Group.

Cynthia holds a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting, with High Honors, from the University of Texas at Austin.



Moderator:
Leah Barton
Head of Operations Strategy for Direct Energy

Leah Barton is Head of Operations Strategy for Direct Energy, the largest competitive retail energy & services provider in North America. In her 10 years in Houston, Leah has held leadership roles in operations, IT, marketing, product management, and strategy with Direct Energy, MXenergy, and Shell Chemical LP. Early in her career, Leah managed stationary power system testing for Nuvera Fuel Cells and also served as a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer in Tanzania.

Leah holds a BS in Chemical Engineering from Yale, an MBA from the Wharton School, and an MA in International Relations from the University of Pennsylvania. She is active in the Houston community, serving as President of the EMERGE Fellowship and Vice President of the UH Friends of Women's Studies. Leah is also past President of the Wharton Club of Houston, past President of the Yale Club of Houston, and former Treasurer of the Museum of Cultural Arts Houston. Leah is married to David Kim with one son, Jesse.