

## Distinguished Alumni Award Winner

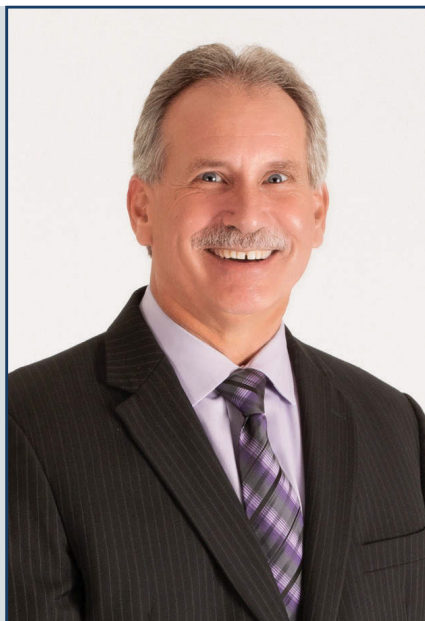
# JOSEPH LEIMKUHLER

By Micaela Myers

It was a serendipitous encounter that led Joseph Leimkuhler to the University of Wyoming. After earning his undergraduate degree in geology and forestry from the University of Montana in 1981, he went to work as a “mud engineer” on drilling rigs in Wyoming. It was there that he met Jack Evers, the former head of petroleum engineering at UW, when Evers brought students for a tour of a rig in the Snowy Range. Leimkuhler was going to head to law school, but Evers had other ideas. Evers encouraged Leimkuhler to complete the undergraduate engineering coursework needed for graduate school admissions — which he did via correspondence while continuing to work on rigs all over the state. Leimkuhler, his wife Stephanie, and their two kids then moved to Laramie, where Leimkuhler completed his master’s degree in petroleum engineering in 1987. Some of his fondest memories include walking with his young children from married student housing to see basketball and football games and flying paper airplanes off the top deck of War Memorial Stadium.

As for his UW education, he says: “When you left this place, you knew how to run a rig. I had internships working with students from bigger schools like Stanford, USC and Texas A&M, and they all asked me how I knew so much more about the practical side of drilling engineering. It was obvious they did not have Jack Evers as a professor.”

That UW education allowed him to



hit the ground running, working for Shell in the deep-water Gulf of Mexico.

“We were drilling wells at 7,000 feet of water, which was the deepest in the world at the time,” Leimkuhler says. “I was always just thrilled to be doing what I was doing at the time because it was always unique, always a challenge. I managed to progress and eventually lead that organization. Sometimes you wake up and pinch yourself: how did I get here?”

At Shell, he worked his way up to offshore well delivery manager for the Americas. In 2012, Leimkuhler left Shell and joined LLOG Exploration Co., where he served as vice president of drilling, helping grow the company into the largest private oil producer in the U.S. and the fourth largest offshore producer. In 2019, a new challenge came his way — shepherding Beacon Offshore Energy from the ground up as the chief operating officer. Beacon is based in both Houston, Texas, and Covington, La., and currently operates six subsea fields and one drilling rig in

the deep-water Gulf of Mexico and is executing development of Shenandoah, the highest pressure offshore oilfield in the U.S.

Leimkuhler and his wife Stephanie live in Mandeville, La. He serves on several boards and has earned a number of awards, including the American Petroleum Institute Meritorious Service Award, the American Association of Drilling Engineers Lifetime Outstanding Service Award and the UW Eminent Engineer Award. Motivated by the incredible opportunities he believes UW provided him, Leimkuhler has continued to give back, serving on the National Advisory Board for the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences and the Petroleum Engineering Advisory Board. He and Stephanie also support UW with their philanthropy through the Joseph and Stephanie Leimkuhler Petroleum Engineering Dean’s Excellence Fund that goes to undergraduate student scholarships, graduate student stipends, undergraduate student enrichment experiences and faculty awards to those who distinguish themselves in scholarly work, as well as other areas of UW.

Leimkuhler’s advice to current students is to bloom where you are planted, let your passion and curiosity carry you forward, and success will find you. He often speaks to future petroleum engineers at UW, inspiring them to see the industry as playing a key role in the world’s future energy needs and transitions. Engineers, he says, are pivotal to finding solutions, mitigating issues and improving people’s lives.