

MEDIA CENTER - Interviews



**Albert I. Vladimirov**  
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 Oil and Gas

***Gubkin University was created more than 80 years ago to provide the country with the necessary human resources in the oil-and-gas sector. You have been appointed in 1993; what would say have been the main milestones and achievements of the University since?***

As the President of Gubkin University my main task is to determine the direction of the Institute's development — building the education methods to satisfy the needs of today's oil-and-gas sector. Our objective is to train competitive professionals to meet the demand of the sector's entire value chain.

We were founded as an independent University in 1930 when both the economy and the society were under serious strain. The 1920's called for rapid industrialization of the economy, with particular emphasis on the development of heavy industries. For that reason, universities with a specific industry focus were formed, which led to the creation of the Moscow Institute of Oil on April 17, 1930, by order of the USSR. The new Moscow Institute of Oil, which grew out of the Oil Faculty.

The University was named in honor of a Russian geologist I. M. Gubkin, who became its first rector. Gubkin University's history is closely linked with the development of the energy sector.

Over time, faculties such as the Faculty of Geology, the Faculty of Petroleum Engineering and also the Faculty of Pipeline Network Design, Construction and Operation were created in response to the requirements of the industry.

In 1991 Russia became independent of the Soviet Union and the Soviet Union fell apart. It was then when the country proceeded to a free market economy. That being said, we changed our educational methods accordingly, thus aligning with the European Union countries, Russia signed the Bologna Declaration. According to the Declaration, an educational system essentially based on undergraduate and graduate, should be adopted. This means that our educational system has shifted from education in accordance with the "demand of the industry" to education in accordance with the "demand of the student". Nevertheless, Gubkin University remained the principal school for the whole technological process of oil-and-gas industry.

The University of Gubkin has a special advantage: it is one of few universities, where the education covers the entire spectrum of the oil and gas industry—from upstream to downstream.

To date, Gubkin has trained over 90,000 diploma engineers, candidates and doctors of science, many of whom are presently top executives of oil-and-gas companies in 114 countries around the globe.

Having started with 4 specialities, the University today offers training in 15 majors, including 26 specialities and 39 scientific areas of specialization.

Furthermore, a Gubkin University Diploma is acknowledged internationally in the oil-and-gas community. For that reason, many international students from more than 50 countries study here.

In Russia, all universities providing higher education in oil-and-gas related specialities are united under one single roof of an educational-methodical union. The Dean of Gubkin University is the Chairman of that Union and ensures that all oil-and-gas related universities are aligned on educational methods and programs.

***The University has developed a wide research capacity, which has led to the development of many new methods of exploration, production, transportation, refining and processing of hydrocarbons. Could you give a flagship example to our readers?***

Looking at the map of oil-and-gas fields in Russia, more than 30 fields are named after graduates of the University. For example the Bovanenkovo field, discovered in 1971 and one of the country's largest gas fields, was named in honor of the Soviet geologist Vadim Bovanenko, a graduate from Gubkin.

Graduates of the Geology Faculty have contributed to the opening of oil and gas fields in Western Siberia, the Caspian Sea and in the Volga region. As far as development of hydrocarbon fields is concerned, the main task of the University resides in scientific research to increase oil reservoir recovery. Annually 50 to 90 projects are patented and later implemented on an industrial scale. Moreover, Gubinsky, a town in Yamalo-Nenets is named after geologist Ivan Gubkin, the founder of the University.

As an example, our Faculty of Mechanical Engineering deals with development of state of the art equipment such as pumps, compressors, refinery equipment, pipe furnaces, surface combustion furnaces, and technologies in the sphere of oil refining.

The Faculty of Automation and Computer Science is known for its contribution to the development of the dispatching of gas transportation system. Among alumni and professors at Gubkin University there are 38 Laureates of the Lenin's Prize, one of the most prestigious awards presented to individuals for accomplishments related to science, literature, arts, architecture, and technology. Additionally, more than 200 State Laureates have graduated from our university. Their technologies have been widely used in the industry.

Gubkin University's uniqueness lies in the wide range of its related specialities covering the full technological spectrum of the oil-and-gas industry. To train our specialists we use the most advanced equipment and softwares. We are truly an ultramodern educational institution.

***Gubkin University has built a strong worldwide network with two international branches – one in Uzbekistan and another in Turkmenistan. Could you tell us more about the University's network?***

Turkmenistan has the second-largest reserves of hydrocarbons in the former Soviet Union, generating high revenue for the State. Also Uzbekistan has abundant oil and natural gas reserves. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, revenues from oil-and-gas production became increasingly important for these countries. For that reason they asked our help to set up subsidiary branches for the training of specialists in the oil-and-gas industry.

Today our scope of cooperation covers areas such as publishing joint textbooks and course materials; developing joint educational and scientific projects, as well as mobility of our students, lecturers, and scientists.

Not only abroad but also in Russia we have established and developed affiliates that subsequently became independent institutions. Today the country has 29 national research universities operating by means of their own standards. A number of them are spin-offs from Gubkin University. The family tree of the Gubkin University has grown bigger and bigger over the years.

***Under your rectorship, Gubkin successfully developed and became the leader in the field of petroleum engineering education and research of Russia. What is your strategy to maintain this position in the coming 2 to 3 years?***

There are only three or four similar universities in the world that cover the whole technological process of the oil-and-gas industry. Gubkin University is focused on the intellectual potential of the oil-and-gas business in Russia and provides the highest level of training.

In order to maintain our leading position in Russia as well as our strong international reputation, we have established partnership agreements with a number of the world's leading international universities to exchange teaching techniques. Among our partners are IFP School in France, Texas Tech University, Stavanger University in Norway and China University of Petroleum.

Moreover, the university has signed agreements of cooperation with dozens of universities in Europe, US, Asia, Africa.

In addition we regularly host international conferences on various aspects of oil-and-gas engineering issues, and faculty members are participating in international events and congresses. Moreover we are members to various international associations and professional societies. For many years Gubkin University has been a member of the European University Association (EUA), together with 500 prominent European universities.

Gubkin University's international activities target closer integration within the international scientific and educational environment, improving our global image and building up the international brand of modern innovative University training world-class professionals for oil-and-gas industries.

***Moscow State University regained a spot among the world's 50 most reputable University's. Do you foresee Gubkin University to be a candidate to get into the world's top rankings by 2020?***

If we compare Moscow State University, Harvard University and Gubkin University, the first two offer students experience across a broad spectrum of academic environments while the latter prepares solely specialists for the oil-and-gas sectors of the industry.

What sets Russian universities apart from Western ones is that our primary focus is on education. The State finances first and foremost the educational process, while the research and development process is financed less.

Once Russian universities will receive financial support from the government to develop academic research, we will be able to compete with well-known institutions such as Harvard University.

Nevertheless, Gubkin University offers all three components: education, research and training. Every year up to 7000 engineers are trained for the oil-and-gas sector.

The first time I came across the different educational systems was in 1989 after the agreement of cooperation between West German and Russian universities was signed by Helmut Kohl and Mikhail Gorbachev.

As head of department of education in the Ministerial Council of the USSR I was granted the opportunity to visit Germany and learn about their educational system.

***What is next for Albert Vladimirov?***

According to the law the Dean of a university cannot be over 65 years old. In exceptional cases however, it is allowed to continue until the age of 70—which I did.

Today I am the President of Gubkin University and mainly focus on the development of the University, its modernization in accordance with a recently adopted law on "Education in the Russian Federation", as well as scientific research and development.

Actually, in the near future, a book which I co-authored on oil-and-gas refinery procedures will be published.

We are living in an era where the oil-and-gas industry is a driving force of the economic development of countries worldwide, and until there is no other alternative in place, there will always be high demand for skilled engineers in the sector.

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