

Wardrop and Franklin new assistant directors

Denice Wardrop and Nancy Franklin joined the Penn State Institutes of Energy and the Environment (PSIEE) as assistant directors effective January 2009. Franklin is the new assistant director of outreach and Wardrop is the new assistant director of the environment. Other members of the administrative team include director Tom Richard, associate director Chunshan Song, and assistant director of water resources Beth Boyer. “Denice Wardrop and Nancy Franklin are already playing a critical role at PSIEE. Denice found some big shoes to fill when Brian Dempsey stepped down in January, but she is showing us how to make those shoes dance, with several new initiatives currently underway. Nancy brings to PSIEE the extraordinary networks and capabilities of Penn State Outreach, and has been doing a wonderful job of making sure our energy and environmental research gets out of the university to the people who can use it. I am very pleased to be working with them both,” says Tom Richard.

Denice Heller Wardrop, senior research associate and associate professor of geography and ecology, has been appointed as assistant director of the Penn State Institutes of Energy and the Environment. Wardrop came to Penn State to pursue a doctorate after a ten-year career in environmental engineering consulting. After matriculation, she began a research career in the Penn State Cooperative Wetlands Center, where she is the associate director. She has a B.S. in Systems Engineering from the University of Virginia, as well as an M.S. in Environmental Sciences, and earned her Ph.D. in Ecology from Penn State. She is a registered Professional Engineer in the commonwealths of Pennsylvania and Virginia.

Wardrop’s research focuses primarily on the effect of human activities on the ecosystem services, and ecological functions and processes in freshwater aquatic systems, including wetlands, headwater streams, and estuarine marshes. She also investigates theoretical frameworks that generally describe how stress (including land cover and climate change) affects ecosystem behavior, including concepts such as alternative stable states, resilience, spatial structure, and non-linearities of system response. She has published extensively on ecological indicators, methods for assessing the condition and ecological functioning of wetlands and streams, the effects of sedimentation and eutrophication on wetland plant communities, and the use of land cover information in predicting the condition of aquatic resources.

theoretical to applied, it has an extensive track record of interdisciplinary research projects, and its location in Geography has provided Wardrop with unique teaching opportunities, as well. Wardrop and her co-instructor, Joe Bishop, recently lead fifteen Penn State students and four Peruvian students to the rainforests of Peru for the third offering of their course, Environmental Issues Across the Americas. The course is intended to provide a team-based, interdisciplinary, problem solving, and field based approach to understanding the importance of place when defining and solving an environmental challenge. The course spends almost two weeks traveling to a series of research stations and native communities in the headwaters of the Amazon Basin. Wardrop’s new duties at PSIEE will offer her an even larger-scale vantage point of the enormous range and potential interconnectedness of Penn State environmental research, and she is thrilled with the opportunity to create new connections among faculty. She believes wholeheartedly in the potential of interdisciplinary science to solve the complex and important environmental problems of the day, and the opportunity to strategically invigorate such efforts at an institution such as Penn State is a compelling challenge.

While the progression from Systems Engineer to Ecologist may seem odd, Wardrop likes to think of it as a natural evolution, from learning the language of system description and behavior to studying one of the most complicated and exquisite systems of all, namely wetlands. Her primary interest has always been water bodies and the linking of physical processes to biological ones, whether they are the tropical shallow marine systems she studied for her master’s degree, or the variety of freshwater wetland types in central Pennsylvania studied for her doctorate.

Wardrop has immensely enjoyed her experience at the Cooperative Wetlands Center, which celebrates its 15-year anniversary this year. Its range of research activities covers

Wardrop owes her Penn State experience to her husband, Rick, a hydrogeologist with Shaw Environment and Infrastructure, who brought her to State College 20 years ago. Their oldest son, Thomas, is a sophomore in Chemical Engineering at Penn State, and their daughter, Morgan, is a volleyball-playing senior at State High. Their third child, a springer spaniel named Lakota, rounds out their household. They spend lots of time on any water body they can find, whether fly fishing or rowing their new scull.



Wardrop co-teaches “Issues Across the Americas” each year. The course includes field school in Peru with an extension to Machu Picchu. Photo is of Denice at Machu Picchu. She can be reached by email at dhw110@psu.edu.

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Franklin is the director of strategic initiatives for Penn State Outreach/Extension. In that capacity she is responsible for providing operational leadership for the energy and environment thematic initiative, increasing the linkages between Outreach, and Cooperative Extension and developing engagement strategies that connect university faculty, students, and staff with Pennsylvania communities and beyond. She convened and currently is coordinating the Energy and Environment Outreach Task Force. The goal of the Task Force is to foster communication and collaboration on energy and environment strategic outreach initiatives.

Before coming to Penn State in 2007 she was the Southside Regional Director of Information Technology at Virginia Tech where she worked to leverage the university's assets in catalyzing economic and community transformation in the economically distressed south central region of Virginia. She was very interested in Penn State because of its strong public research institution reputation, highly regarded outreach organization, presidential

commitment to engagement, and extensive statewide presence.

Commenting on her new position, Franklin says "I thought this role offered the opportunity to link together critical elements of and people in the university focused on energy and environment issues. Through increased communication and synergy of activities across research, education, and outreach I believe Penn State is better positioned to be an international leader in energy and environment."

She was born in Philadelphia and raised in Bethlehem, PA but has not lived in PA since college. She earned her B.S in Education from Bucknell University; her M.A. in University Administration from Virginia Tech; and her Ed.D. in Higher Education Management from the University of Pennsylvania.

Her husband, Tim Franklin, is the director of the Office of Economic and Workforce Development at Penn State. She has three children: Trevor, a junior at Bucknell



Nancy can be reached by email at nef10@psu.edu.

University who is double majoring in computer science and philosophy; Torrey, a senior at State College Area High School who is waiting for college acceptance letters; and Maddi, an eighth grader at Park Forest Middle School who is enjoying the snowy climate and living in State College. ■