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New Career Development Program Equips EM Employees with Leadership Skills

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Fresh from of a new federal career development program, John Unyong Moon is ready to accomplish some big plans.

He is one of two EM employees who were part of the inaugural class that completed the [Asian American Government Executives Network \(AAGEN\) Senior Executive Service \(SES\) Development Program](#) this spring. Altogether, 20 fellows from several federal agencies graduated from the program.

Moon plans use the knowledge he acquired in the program to help DOE become more effective and efficient. He also wants to use his skills to coach and mentor other Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) to ascend to career leadership positions.

“Being in the SES Development Program and the temporary detail positions in DOE’s [National Nuclear Security Administration \(NNSA\)](#) and [Office of Economic Impact and Diversity \(ED\)](#) helped me to open my eyes to see what DOE does overall. I think I can really help DOE become better,” said Moon, who learned about leadership, public relations and networking in the yearlong program.



Members of the 2013 AAGEN SES Development Program class gather for a photo at the program's kickoff at the White House in March 2012. EM's John Moon and Dr. Ming Zhu are in the second row; Moon is second from left and Zhu is third from left. Melvin G. Williams, Jr., former Associate Deputy Energy Secretary, is seated far left in the first row.

AAPIs are about 6 percent of the federal workforce. However, they are underrepresented — at about 3 percent — in the [SES](#), a corps of government executives selected for their leadership qualifications. In response, President Barack Obama signed an executive order requiring federal agencies to identify ways to foster the recruitment, career development and advancement of AAPIs. By 2011, AAGEN, whose role is to promote, expand and support AAPI leadership in government, created its development program with help from the [U.S. Office of Personnel Management](#), the [White House Initiative on AAPIs](#) and the [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#).

Moon formerly worked as the EM headquarters liaison to the [Savannah River Site](#) in South Carolina. He is currently serving the detail as acting principal deputy director for ED, reporting directly to Assistant Secretary Dot Harris. Moon also is president of the DOE's Asian American and Pacific Islanders Network.

“We want to congratulate Ming and John for their successful completion of this yearlong SES Development Program and as the first class in the program for being pioneers for those who will follow.”

--[EM Deputy Assistant Secretary for Site Restoration Mark Gilbertson](#)

[EM Associate Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Alice Williams](#) encouraged Moon to work as a senior technical advisor for [NNSA Associate Administrator for Management and Budget Cindy Lersten](#), a position Moon accepted. He was challenged to think outside the box and approach the position with new perspectives as he worked with five SES leaders in NNSA to prepare a strategic staffing analysis.

“It was a wonderful opportunity. I highly recommend it,” Moon said. “I thank DOE — especially EM, NNSA and ED — for allowing me to complete the SES Development Program and allowing me to serve. I look forward to having more opportunities in leadership.”



EM's John Moon, left to right, Melvin G. Williams, Jr., former Associate Deputy Secretary of Energy, and EM's Ming Zhu at the AAGEN SES Development Program kickoff in March 2012 at the White House.

Dr. Ming Zhu, the other EM employee who graduated from the SES program, is the EM headquarters liaison to the Hanford site's [Richland Operations Office](#). Like SRS, Hanford is one of the DOE's largest legacy waste sites, and Hanford and SRS together account for more than half of EM's portfolio. In October, Zhu received the DOE Secretary's Achievement Award for his role in managing the construction of the [Hanford 200 West Groundwater Pump & Treat System](#).

In his four-month SES detail in the [Department of Homeland Security](#) (DHS), Ming had an “eye-opening experience,” working closely with many veterans of the armed services for the first time. He was a senior advisor on strategic planning to the [Science and Technology Directorate Homeland Security Advanced Research Projects Agency](#) (HSARPA) Director Paul Benda. HSARPA is the primary research and development (R&D) agency to DHS and the greater [Homeland Security Enterprise](#).

In this role, Zhu led a multidisciplinary team that provided Benda technical and policy advice

on HSARPA's strategic planning efforts involving topics such as cyber security, aviation security and chemical and biological threat detection and response. Zhu and his team developed R&D strategies and priority guidance to benefit the operations of the [U.S. Secret Service](#), [Transportation Security Administration](#), [Customs and Border Protection](#) and [Federal Protective Service](#).

"It was quite an interesting experience. It is invaluable to my professional growth," said Zhu, who also serves as chair of the [Interagency Steering Committee on Multimedia Environmental Modeling](#) and co-chair of AAGEN's Programs and Education Committee.



EM's Dr. Ming Zhu, left, receives his certificate from Chris Lu, former Assistant to the President and Cabinet Secretary, at the AAGEN SES Development Program graduation ceremony in Washington, D.C. in April.

The experience taught him to focus more on the forest instead of the trees.

"I think the management skills I picked up from the program have really opened my perspective so I can see the EM program more holistically, rather than focusing on an individual project."

Zhu also said the SES program came at the right time in his career, as he marked more than a quarter century of technology development and program management work, including directing work at DOE national laboratories and engineering firms on high-level waste disposal programs.

"It's almost natural at this stage in my career to take on additional challenges that are only offered at the SES level," he said.

Zhu, like Moon, was encouraged to enter the program by EM Deputy Assistant Secretary for Site Restoration Mark Gilbertson.

“We want to congratulate Ming and John for their successful completion of this yearlong SES Development Program and as the first class in the program for being pioneers for those who will follow,” Gilbertson said. “We are also proud that EM had two of the first 20 graduates in this highly competitive program spanning all federal agencies.”

Contributors

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