PROFESSIONAL RELATIONS BULLETIN

No. 76, December, 2006 Dennis Chamot, Editor

FROM THE EDITOR ...

Those of you who read C&EN cover to cover may have noticed my Comment on page 86 of the December 4, 2006 issue. I noted that I was re-elected a Director-at-Large (for my third and final term), and that it was a good time to both reminisce and to look forward. From the DPR perspective, I look back with great pride and satisfaction that I was a founding member of the Division, virtually the only editor of this newsletter (there was a brief period when Steve Quigley and John Ruth put it out), chair of the Division some time ago, and for many years one of your councilors.

In looking forward, from a Society perspective, I noted in the C&EN comment that, "If we focus on our members, current and future, on their needs and concerns, we will automatically concentrate on doing just those things that will ensure the continued health of and high regard for our Society." However, perceptions and priorities differ. The future directions of ACS are not cast in cement. My own view is that the Society must remain a professional membership organization first and foremost. That means that we maintain professional standards for membership eligibility (we should be broad and welcoming, but still insist on a professional background, broadly defined, not merely an "interest" in science, like AAAS), and we should emphasize that ACS remain a membership organization, and not become a collection of businesses of which the membership organization would be only one of many.

DPR has a major role to play. This Division focuses on the individual chemical professional, and needs to continue to do so. We need to constantly remind our colleagues of Alan Nixon's mantra, "The first responsibility of the ACS is to its members."

-- Dennis Chamot

Equipping the 2015 Chemical Technology Workforce

Equipping the 2015 Chemical Technology Workforce was launched at the ACS Fall 2006 National Meeting in San Francisco, with a day-long Presidential Event. More than 70 attendees and 20 panelists and presenters engaged in lively discussion about the roles of industry, academia, and professional societies in the education and career development of chemical technicians.

Several themes emerged from the discussion. One is that the role of the technician in industry is changing. Technicians are increasingly required to be more flexible, impendent, and knowledgeable then ever before. The rapid pace of industry means that technicians have to be prepared to enter the laboratory almost immediately upon hiring.

The range of degrees required for technicians is broadening, with many employers requiring Bachelor's degrees of their employees. After hiring, technicians will need to acquire new skills throughout their careers as their duties and equipment change. Consequently, continuing education will play a large role in technicians' careers.

Another theme was that of collaboration among industry, academia, and professional societies as the key to properly preparing technicians for the laboratory. All three have resources available to prepare and maintain the knowledge and skills of technicians; such resources need to be promoted, leveraged, and used synergistically.

A third theme centered on the technicians themselves. Technicians remain the go-to people in the laboratory. Consequently, technicians make great volunteers. Including technicians in projects and activities increases the likelihood of success. Technicians also benefit professionally from volunteer work, which gives them the opportunity to develop skills they may not use at work.

The next phase of the Equipping the 2015 Chemical Technology Workforce initiative is the development of local activities, either by using information gleaned from the symposium or by using the symposium as a template. Some possible activities include:

- Meetings between industry and academia to share resources and align needs
- Panel discussions with industry representatives to discuss technician hiring practices
- Events for high school students featuring technicians from regional industries
- Training and career development workshops

In the coming months, activities developed by local sections will be posted, along with reports and resources from the Equipping the 2015 Chemical Technology Workforce symposium, at www.ChemTechLinks.org. To request guidance in developing programs, suggest activities, or report on a successful event, email ChemTechLinks@acs.org.

Submitted by Janet M. Smith, immediate past chair of the Division of Chemical Technicians (TECH) and Principal Technician at Dow Corning Corporation.

Election Results

Congratulations to the following successful candidates in the 2006 DPR elections. Elected or re-elected for terms beginning 2007 are:

Chair-Elect: David J. Chesney
Treasurer: Christopher J. Bannochie
Councilor: John K. Borchardt
Alternate Councilor: Mark D. Frishberg
Members-at-Large: Michael J. Brownfield, Mark C. Cesa and Lynne P. Greenblatt

DPR Strategic Planning

The Division is trying to revitalize itself by focusing on providing programs, products and services to meet the needs of its membership. As such, the division leadership recently participated in a session to develop a Strategic Plan for 2007-2009 for the DPR. The session was led by a facilitator from the ACS, Dale Gaddy, and was attended by 11 people representing the past, present and future leadership of the division, as well as representatives from non-technical national ACS committees such as the Younger Chemists Committee (YCC), the Women Chemists Committee (WCC), the Committee on Chemists with Disabilities (CWD), the Committee on Minority Affairs (CMA), the Committee on Economic and Professional Affairs (CEPA) and the Committee on Ethics. The group developed a plan with a number of strategies. You will hear more about this plan as it is developed and implemented.

Book Review

Nontraditional Careers for Chemists. New Formulas in Chemistry, by Lisa M. Balbes. Oxford University Press, 307 pages, including index, soft cover (2007).

This is a very useful and interesting book. The author highlights more than a dozen broad areas in which chemists can and do work outside of the research arena (e.g., sales and marketing, patent law, regulatory affairs, information science, safety and health, public policy – full disclosure: I am one of the people profiled in the public policy chapter). What makes the book particularly attractive is the combination of brief, accurate, well written discussions of what is involved in each area with individual pieces on several people who have moved from traditional chemical research into those areas. In many cases, the paths followed by individuals to get to their present positions were neither obvious initially nor planned. Yet each found themselves in jobs that, in a very satisfying way, combined the strengths of their chemical training with other interests and skills, sometimes interests that they didn't know they had.

This book will be useful both to students as well as to mid-career chemists looking for a change. To quote myself, "...with some talent and ability, and an excellent chemistry education, many things are possible." Lisa Balbes offers an excellent look at many possibilities.