ACS Presidential Election

Doing Our Best for ACS, Chemistry Education, and Society

by Bassam Z. Shakhashiri

I am eager and able to accept the challenges and responsibilities of the presidency of the world’s leading scientific organization to further serve the members of ACS and society at large. I ask for your vote to help me advance the mission of ACS, to maintain its preeminence, to strengthen its effectiveness, and to expand its contributions. I need your help for what is BEST for ACS:

Benefit and enable members to flourish scientifically, economically, and professionally.

Encourage creativity, innovation, collaboration, and competitiveness.

Stimulate connections, partnerships, and effective communications.

Teach chemistry well at all levels and communicate its importance to the public.

As ACS president I will work closely with members and non-members to enhance the quality of our chemistry education programs and to increase their effectiveness. Education is key to fulfilling the mission of ACS and achieving its dynamic goals. Education is the key to personal enrichment, to social and professional advancement, and for preparation to serve and advance humanity. The rich array of programs offered by the Division of Chemical Education and by the Education Division at ACS headquarters sets standards for excellence in chemistry education everywhere. Through publications, meetings and conferences, technical and continuing education workshops, and policy statements, we reach students and teachers at all levels, people in industry, and decision-makers in government and the private sector.

The ACS president is the most visible advocate for the chemical sciences everywhere. I will devote my presidency to helping our members showcase the best of chemistry as it addresses significant human and societal issues. I have had experience in thinking about and acting on important professional and societal aspects of chemistry, especially in science education. I have often declared that the purpose of research is to advance knowledge, that the purpose of technology is to advance the human condition, and that the purpose of education is to enable individuals to fulfill their human potential.

I have reached many audiences through my scholarly activities and through my presentations on public and commercial radio and television, in national, international, and local newspapers and magazines, through my chemical demonstrations books and other publications, and through my public service in local, regional, national, and international arenas. These experiences are personally satisfying and have been well received. Throughout my career I have promoted chemistry both as the central science and as the familiar science. The familiarity of chemistry has yet to be fully exploited in reaching the various segments of society, especially the non-specialists. We must increase awareness of chemicals, their transformations, hazards, and how they benefit our health, safety, and environment.

Chemistry is taught by dedicated individuals whose efforts must become more valued and better rewarded by society. The challenge of enhancing the effectiveness of teachers and the recognition due them must be spearheaded by ACS. Creative concepts and practices must be developed and implemented in collaboration with all concerned at the local, state, and national levels. We must be inventive and forceful in addressing difficult issues including teachers’ salaries, integrity of curriculum, laboratory instruction, safety, the effective use of technology, diminishing resources, and declining general interest in science.

The chemical sciences are vital to our democracy. They bring a wide range of goods and functions to everyone. Science literacy is necessary for the democratic process to work, and I am a tireless promoter of achieving it. I make a distinction between scientific literacy, expertise in a particular field, and science literacy, a broad appreciation and understanding of science and its practitioners, and of what science is capable of achieving and what it cannot accomplish. Science literacy enlightens and enables people to make informed choices, to be skeptical, and to reject shams, quackery, unproven conjecture, and to avoid being bamboozled into making foolish decisions where matters of science and technology are concerned. Science literacy is for everyone—chemists, artists, humanists, all professionals, the general public, youth and adults alike.

Every ACS member has responsibilities to promote chemistry education at home, in the neighborhood, in the workplace and through professional connections, at the local, state, and national government levels, and through civic and religious organizations. Academic, industrial, and government chemists can make valuable contributions to the ACS education programs and must be encouraged to participate. We must increase our efforts at the K–16 levels to attract students to careers in chemistry and to careers in teaching chemistry.

I ask for your vote for ACS president and for your collaboration to do what is best for ACS, for chemistry education, and for society.

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