

Why Do *YOU* Belong to ASEE?

The activities sponsored by the American Association of Engineering Educators (ASEE) are the principal forum in North America for the discussion of issues related to our profession—engineering education. The Chemical Engineering Division is one of the most active divisions in this professional society; it is responsible for the Chemical Engineering Summer School, programming at the annual conference, and the publication of this journal. The following letters give us a flavor of the diverse motives that exist for joining a professional organization such as ASEE and the benefits that accrue from membership. We strongly encourage our readers to consider expanding their involvement in ASEE.

To the Editor:

Early in my teaching career I joined ASEE and attended an effective teaching workshop at the annual meeting at Penn State. The techniques and ideas I learned at that workshop, plus those learned at subsequent ASEE meetings, have been invaluable to me over the past 20 years. At every ASEE meeting I have attended I have learned something that improves my teaching. In addition, the ASEE meetings have a far different milieu than meetings that focus on research. The atmosphere is one where kindred spirits spend time discussing with one another how to be better teachers, exchanging ideas on education and how to solve problems they face in the classroom and in their department.

The rewards from my association with ASEE have come not only to me, but also to the students I have had in class.

I feel it would be a benefit if every chemical engineering department would send at least one member to the annual meeting who could share information and ideas on teaching with their department colleagues.

Scott Fogler

Chemical Engineering
Division Chair, ASEE
The University of Michigan

To the Editor:

With this note I would like to suggest why ASEE and its ChE Division are important to the professional development of chemical engineering faculty and to urge wider participation in it.

Although most ChE faculty are actively engaged in both teaching and research, our efforts to develop professional competence and accomplishment in these two domains are quite different. As a rule, we participate actively in the AIChE as well as in other professional societies which focus on specific areas of science and technology relevant to our

research interests. This is done, with the strong encouragement of senior faculty and academic administrators, as a means of rapid exchange of new technical developments, intellectual stimulation, networking with peers, and general professional growth. We similarly publish in research journals sponsored by these societies and by commercial scientific publishers to record, disseminate, and seek validation of our research results.

While the AIChE and the domain focused professional societies have educational objectives within their mission statements, few if any make the educational process a primary focus. Yet, the needs for and benefits of rapid dissemination, validation, and networking are every bit as real for the teaching side of our professional life. Teaching competence cannot grow by just “doing” in isolation. We all need to continuously improve our teaching skills by sharing with each other alternative ways of capturing and presenting difficult concepts to students, novel ways of enhancing the value of student-teacher contact time, and the lessons of explorations of new instructional delivery technologies. A forum for this purpose exists but too few of us participate actively in it.

The ASEE exists precisely to provide an organized framework for disseminating, validating, and learning best practices in engineering education, through publications, such as *CEE*, through regular professional meetings, periodic faculty summer programs, and the work of its divisions and committees. As an organization, it will be most effective and relevant if all of the most creative, productive, and energetic teachers of the engineering profession are among its active members. I strongly encourage the brilliant young ChE faculty who are the future of our profession and the master teachers-scholars who define its core to join in ASEE and its ChE Division. Through our collective efforts we have an opportunity to “re-engineer” the ChE Division into a model of a vibrant community of engineering educators who will

lead in the revitalization of the teaching component of our professorial profession.

G. V. Reklaitis

Purdue University

To the Editor:

My original motivation to be a faculty member in chemical engineering was based on my perception that teaching was the primary activity. This was a view I held as an undergraduate and graduate student until the day I came to The University of Texas at Austin as an Assistant Professor. My perspective changed suddenly when I realized that classroom teaching is only a part of the package. For all faculty time is a precious resource that is divided among teaching, research, department and university service, and professional activities. However, our commitment to be an excellent teacher should not take a back seat to efforts at being a leading researcher. One of the ways to honor this commitment is to be a member of ASEE and be a regular reader of its publications as well as attend society meetings.

Staying up-to-date in areas I teach, such as process control, optimization, and modeling, requires a special effort because of the new software that has appeared during the past decade. Attendance at ASEE meetings, and especially the ChE Summer School, has helped keep me current on new software developments and innovative ideas in computer-aided instruction. I view ASEE membership as integral to my success as an engineering educator—and I use the term “educator” holistically.

In the future, due to economic forces, I believe that universities will be called upon to review their commitment to education of all types (undergraduate, graduate, extension, technical, individual), and membership in ASEE will become even more important in this new environment.

Thomas F. Edgar

The University of Texas at Austin

To the Editor:

The Chemical Engineering Division of ASEE has been a motive force in my career. I would like to take this opportunity to recount some of my experiences. Perhaps like many other faculty I have long been aware of some of the Division activities, but until I became active in ASEE perhaps 15 years ago I was not fully aware that it was the Division that sponsored them.

Chemical Engineering Education has always been my favorite journal. It is the only journal I will routinely read from cover to cover. Ray Fahien has done an outstanding job improving the quality of the journal to the point where it is the envy of most other ASEE divisions. We should be proud of it.

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The 3M Lectureship was synonymous with outstanding educators from my earliest recollections as a young faculty member. I never really associated the award with ASEE until recently when the sponsorship passed on temporarily to the Chemical Engineering Division itself and now to Union Carbide. Of more recent origin, the Corcoran and Martin awards also reflect the Division's recognition of contributions to education.

I was never able to take advantage of the third major activity sponsored by the Division until relatively recently either. Nor did I realize that the Chemical Engineering Summer School, held every five years for essentially the past 50 years, was sponsored by the Division. I now regret that I did not take advantage of the opportunity to attend earlier in my career. It is a unique opportunity to focus on the teaching part of our jobs.

We all have demands on our time going far beyond the nominal 40-hour week. The ASEE deserves some portion of every engineering educator's time. Perhaps only in retrospect can I see how important the ASEE can be. The activities cited above may be the major contributions of the Chemical Engineering Division, but don't forget the programming at the ASEE Annual Meeting. What I have come to value most are the recurrent sessions on improving teaching effectiveness. The ASEE offers a needed complement to primary research focus at other society meetings.

John C. Friedly

University of Rochester

To the Editor:

The twin emphasis on quality teaching and quality research is one of the reasons why I enjoy my work in the Chemical Engineering Department at the University of Wisconsin. There is this belief that research goes hand in hand with innovative graduate-level teaching; from there, successful teaching experiments create material for modernization of the undergraduate curriculum (this approach was described as one of the Hougen Principles in an article by R.B. Bird in a recent *CEE* article).

I joined the ASEE in the fall of 1993 to meet others with a commitment to teaching excellence. Recently, I have been organizing new research results in my area of research interest (particulate fluid dynamics and high performance parallel computing), accumulated over the past dozen years, into topical modules for introductory graduate level courses and advanced undergraduate electives. I believe that ASEE meetings and journals are good places to learn about techniques for introducing new materials. And of course, some years down the road, I hope to reciprocate by dissemination of my experience through ASEE meetings and publications.

Sangtae Kim

University of Wisconsin, Madison