and what students are *really* required to do can be difficult. Moreover, the accreditation team is under such intense time pressure that the visitor cannot even see professional colleagues and friends at the school being visited.

Most visitors do a good job. The E and A Committee works hard to insure that the visitors (known as "program evaluators" in the trade) are trained for their task; each must attend a three-hour accreditation workshop and then go on one accreditation visit as an observer before serving as an evaluator. However, even with this help a few of them still apply too rigorously the standards they think they remember from their own education, perhaps thirty years earlier . . . or disregard the criteria and inject their own educational theories into the evaluation. The E and A Committee must learn of these biases quickly and correct them in any summary report. Repeat offenders are not assigned to new visits. In addition, any school can object beforehand to an individual visitor who may have a conflict of interest or is thought to be biased. However, one school objected to 80 of 83 potential visitors, an action interpreted as an effort to predetermine the outcome of the visit.

We are indebted to those currently serving as visitors, and we are eager to encourage more who are interested. We recognize that we can offer no rewards but the feeling of service and the chance to work with other professionals in doing a job well. We admit that serving as a visitor is an invitation to criticism; every visitor who finds something lacking in a program runs the risk of vilification. At the same time, we always need good, new visitors—especially those underrepresented in our current pool. These underrepresented segments include women, minorities, and those with significant industrial experience (most of all, those with experience both in industry *and* in teaching).

If you—you, there— were critical of your last accreditation visitor, and yet (like most of us) believe that accreditation has value, why not volunteer?

***Educational Innovation*** • Finally, we want to stress that the accreditation criteria do allow exemptions for educational innovation. We are dismayed that few departments, if any, seek accreditation on this basis. We can imagine many good reasons for such failure. One reason may be a university-wide core curriculum that restricts student choice; such curricula can cripple chemical engineering programs. Another, probably more significant, reason is the fear that deviations from a "standard" chemical engineering curriculum taught in a "standard" manner will jeopardize a program's accreditation.

The chemical engineering program criteria require coverage of certain subjects, but don't specify how much time must be devoted to each of them. If you feel that your curriculum could be improved by reducing duplicate coverage in thermodynamics and increasing student electives, why not give it a try? Why not consider replacing traditional mathematics courses with "just-in-time" modules? How about the possibility of eliminating certain required courses altogether and replacing them with student projects? If you are concerned with how these innovations affect your accreditation, discuss your goals with the E and A Committee as part of your planning.

## EPILOGUE

In the final analysis, accreditation is a creature of the engineering profession, heavily influenced by engineering educators. Faculty members and deans make up the majority of the E and A Committee, the EAC, and the ABET Board of Directors. If accreditation is a problem, you and we are a big part of that problem—and you and we *must* be a big part of its solution. ❐

## ChE conferences

### International Conference on Natural Gas Hydrates

June 20-24, 1993

Lake Mohonk Mountain House; New Paltz, New York

Meeting purpose is to determine the state-of-the-art of natural gas hydrate knowledge and to determine the areas in which future work will be needed. A broad field of noted researchers will present the latest findings and will be available to exchange views aimed at bringing the current science and engineering of hydrate formation, control, and utilization into focus. Conference Steering Committee: E. Dendy Sloan (Colorado School of Mines) and John Happel (Columbia University). For further information, contact Conference Department, New York Academy of Sciences, 2 East 63rd Street, New York, NY 10021 (212-838-0230) ❐

### Reaction Engineering and Applied Catalysis

May 12-14, 1993

The University of Michigan; Ann Arbor, Michigan

Fee: $765

Chemical reactions occur in a variety of different systems and are essential in numerous technological areas including the automotive industry, the chemical and petroleum industries, and environmental engineering. The goal of this course is to provide a background in the practical aspects of kinetics, catalysis, and reaction engineering. The fundamentals of kinetics, catalysis, and transport will be applied in the analysis and design of reaction systems. For complete information or to register, contact Engineering Conferences, 300 Chrysler Center, North Campus, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-2092 (313-764-8490) ❐