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Letter from the Executive Director



AIChE Takes its Cue from Industry

AIChE is pursuing a strategy that is changing the Institute's activities to assure continued relevance to chemical engineers of the future. As you all know — and as previous articles in *CEP* have documented (Jan. 2002 "Road Ahead" special report) — our profession is undergoing some very significant transitions.

Most AIChE members who work in industry have seen dramatic changes in the way their companies do business. The organizations for which our members work for have found many creative ways to improve productivity and form successful alliances with customers and, at times, even with competitors. It's time for professional societies to learn these same lessons.

One of the strongest arguments for alliances among professional societies was advanced by the National Research Council report, "Beyond the Molecular Frontier." It's becoming clear that multidisciplinary interactions are the drivers as innovation accelerates and technologies converge, particularly in areas such as nanotechnology and biotechnology. Therefore, AIChE has an important role to play in promoting interactions at the professional society level. In the last three years, AIChE has cosponsored meetings with the ACS, ASME and IEEE, to name a few.

We're also working on innovative programs that could facilitate opportunities for AIChE members to become joint members of other engineering organizations. As we consider such alliances, our determination is to provide AIChE members with the best opportunities to advance their careers. While future chemical engineers will likely use technical information from many societies, we still believe that AIChE will always be their "home."

Like your organizations, professional societies can identify their core competencies. For most associations like AIChE, these are found in technical activities, such as publications and meetings. However, most large professional societies have been slow to outsource what is not "core."

In this respect, AIChE has been unique in its aggressive pursuit of partnerships in the operation of some of its functions — even some of its core competencies. We've formed a strong partnership with John Wiley & Son as the publisher for AIChE's journals. AIChE maintains ownership and editorial direction, while leveraging Wiley's economies of scale in online and print publication. AIChE and ASME recently announced a partnership for continuing education programs. By combining two strong course portfolios, we're expanding offerings at substantial discounts, while realizing savings running these programs. Agreements like these are so significant because they can improve service to members and the Institute's bottomline.

AIChE plans on continuing to be a leader in catalyzing an alliance continuum in the association world. We've only begun to see the benefits of leveraging alliances for our members.

John A. Sofranko, Executive Director
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Before becoming AIChE's executive director, Dr. Sofranko held leadership roles over a 22-year career at ARCO Chemical Co. and Lyondell Chemical Co. He started his career in process R&D and has co-authored over 150 U.S. and foreign patents. His experience also includes managing, strategic planning, commercial business, merger and acquisition and licensing.

