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NEXT MEETING: WHAT IS A CHEMICAL ENGINEER DOING HERE?

<http://fuze.me/23817279> (detailed directions on page 4)

THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 2014

9:00 pm EST, 8:00 pm CST, 7:00 pm MST, 6:00 pm PST

This joint meeting with the Young Professionals and the Virtual Local section is based on Elizabeth Guenther’s September 2013 CEP article of the same name. Whether you are a recent graduate looking to get involved or your AIChE communities are struggling without new interest, you will appreciate the practical advice and insight for and about Young Professionals. As chair of the Young Professionals Committee (YPC) in AIChE, Elizabeth will discuss the importance of YPC in AIChE, YPC activities, and potential for collaboration with other AIChE communities. She will also discuss how recent graduates and new AIChE members can get involved in the Institute through YPC, and tips for AIChE communities looking to increase their membership with YPs.

Presenter: Elizabeth Guenther is a Senior Industrial Engineer at OSRAM Sylvania with responsibility for processes and projects at its Eastern Distribution Center. She is this year’s AIChE Young Professionals Committee (YPC) Chair. She has held positions in several other non-chemical fields. Her bachelor’s degree is in chemical engineering from the University of Virginia and her MBA is from Lehigh University.



Elizabeth lives in the Lehigh Valley area of Pennsylvania with her husband. When not working, Elizabeth enjoys swimming competitively, doing craft projects and baking. Elizabeth can be reached at elizabeth.guenther@sylvania.com

More information on the [VLS Events Page](#)

FROM THE CHAIR: “GETTING INVOLVED”

It’s almost a cliché. Organizations, including



AIChE and its many constituent communities, so often need people to “get involved.” Members interested in increasing their

participation ask their organization’s leadership “How do people get involved?” Both the need and the interest are real, but sometimes there is disconnect between the two. We are looking forward to this month’s meeting with Elizabeth Guenther, AIChE Young Professionals Committee chair, who will talk about involvement of Young Professionals in the Institute. We hope this talk will be of interest both to the AIChE communities in need of “involvement” and to those seeking to “to get involved”. In anticipation of this month’s meeting, I share a few thoughts that will help bridge the gap between organizations and the potentially involved.

Purpose. If Dr. DB taught me anything in graduate school, it was to critically ask, “What is the objective?” For any set of experiments, what data would be obtained and how would it specifically be used? AIChE communities and the potentially involved need this same approach. Before communities are successful at getting people hooked on “involvement”, the objective of that involvement should be clear. Those seeking involvement should also consider their objectives, as that will shape the kind of opportunities they should seek.

For organizations, the purpose for involvement may point to the overall

purpose of the community or to specific objectives. For instance, our VLS objective is to *provide a local section experience* for those who can’t participate in a conventional local section. Everything we do as the VLS should point back to that. Within each overall purpose, there are specific tasks—maybe collecting email addresses, raising money, hosting events, or publishing a newsletter—to which leadership should strive to attach specific purposes and then recruit involvement. It’s almost always easier for folks to “get involved” when they have a clear idea of what they will be doing.

It is important for those of you seeking involvement to be clear about your purposes as well. Some folks may be “getting involved” as a job-seeking tool. Others may be seeking to advance the science in their work areas, others perhaps to find a home for their passions on societal impact, and others may be looking to put decades of experience to use. Different tasks are going to require different levels and lengths of commitment, so do consider your purpose for getting involved and whether the tasks match your objectives.

Connection. The most perfect match between objectives of organization and volunteers is realized if both parties are connected properly. A great way to make initial connections is attending the AIChE Annual Meetings and Spring Meetings, which are some of the largest gatherings of chemical engineers on the planet. There are many opportunities at the various community meetings that are open to everyone. Divisions, forums, and other communities should reach out with open and well-advertised meetings, and then have meaningful agendas planned that engage the newcomers. Even if you’re not

sure about your commitment, those seeking to be involved should attend as many different meetings as they can to gauge what communities fit their objectives and interests. If you're not able to attend the national meetings, we welcome your participation in the VLS and if you're near a conventional local section, try involvement with them. In this digital age, look for AIChE communities of interest to you on LinkedIn, or at the AIChE blog, [CheNected](#). This tool is one of the easiest and completely free tools that AIChE communities can use to get information out to their members and to the entire Institute.

Participation. Once you have considered objectives and found new involvement, it's important to continue participating in that community. That doesn't mean keeping the same roles in the organization, but once you get involved you accrue institutional knowledge that makes you valuable for helping to guide and lead the community. AIChE communities should encourage the newly involved to keep them participating with new tasks and growth opportunities. Keep an open mind about new initiatives and don't be afraid to let new involvement take on some leadership roles—prove them with small tasks to be sure, but once proven, let them lead with bigger and more substantial initiatives.

Through a careful focus on defining our purpose, reaching out to make new connections, and ensuring a path for ongoing participation, our AIChE communities and those looking to get involved will have much more success. I hope you will participate in the March 27 VLS meeting and I hope to meet some more of you at the Spring Meeting in New Orleans.

-- Noah Meeks

MISSED THE FEBRUARY VLS MEETING?

Videos of the VLS meetings appear on our website or on [ChemEonDemand](#), but just in case the links there aren't working for everyone by press time, here are a few highlights.

Last month, Steve Brown of Chemstations, talked with the attendees of the VLS about the [Chemical Engineers Are Heroes Campaign](#). "Talked with" is not a figure of speech. It was an interactive meeting, as Steve sought input on how best to get across his message. He and his company are addressing a real issue – the public image of chemistry, chemicals, and chemical engineering. Steve's attitude is great: he views all those awkward conversation moments we all know, which range from the befuddled or curious "what are chemical engineers?" to the haughty or hostile "I don't believe in chemicals" as moments of opportunity for education.

Steve gave us some great tools for using in those situations clear goals, methods of communicating, and examples that matter to people. His goals in are simply "to plant the seed" in a brief communication, so that non-engineers will think again, and maybe soften a hardline position or be curious enough to find out more from good sources on their own. His communication techniques start, include a soft, friendly approach, requesting permission to engage, by asking a question, like "Can I talk to you about that?" or "Can I ask you why you say that?", keeping things brief (5 minutes or less) and simple, and finding points to agree on. "Yes, oil spills are bad, but we are working on prevention, clean ups, and alternative fuels. In the meantime, we all need our cars." Above all, use examples that relate to person you are

talking to, like new drugs and materials for electronic devices from cell phones to heart monitors. (Note the difference between engineer-to-engineer communications that might be phrased “innovative pharmaceuticals, electronics materials for communications to biomedical monitoring”.) He focuses on leaving the conversation having conveyed a simple message, like “chemical engineers make the world a better, safer place”.

The interactive discussion included other ways to spread the word, with social media and paraphernalia, like T-shirts and wristbands. The discussion also touched on whether “hero” is the right branding for this campaign.

To learn more, visit our video archive, where Steve explains this grassroots campaign in more detail.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Every Fourth Thursday – VLS Meetings

The 2014 [AICHE SPRING MEETING](#) and 10th Global Congress on Process Safety will be held in New Orleans from March 30 - April 3, 2014.

2014 [Local Sections' Leadership Workshop](#) will be held in New Orleans from March 29 - March 30, 2014. Noah Meeks has more information.

April 10, 2014: VLS Leadership meeting.

These events are primarily for officers and chairs within the section, but all interested VLS members and other AIChE members are welcome. Please send any agenda items in advance to Noah <http://fuze.me/23817403>

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER

Gleefully accepted by the editor at jbrand@unl.edu using “VLS Newsletter” in the subject line

ATTENDING A VLS MEETING

- Go to <http://fuze.me/23817279> and follow directions. (The “name” requested would be the name displayed to other meeting participants.)
- For audio only: (If prompted, enter the meeting number: 23188555, then press #)
 - From a browser, select the internet audio option after joining.
 - From a phone:
 - US: +12014794595 or +18553463893
 - International access numbers <https://www.fuzebox.com/extras/symphony>
- Having problems? Follow the meeting link from our website virtual.aiche.org
- Need more help? You can connect to the Customer Support Team or access self-help tools at www.fuzebox.com/support.

Attendance at a Virtual Section Meeting is open to AIChE Virtual Local Section Members, AIChE members and other interested people.