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Letter from the Executive Director



Serving the Core of Our Changing Discipline

As you've probably heard, AIChE's recent initiatives in biotechnology, nanotechnology and sustainability are meeting with considerable success. The Society for Biological Engineering is holding conferences that bring disciplines and industries together to help realize the benefits of bioprocessing, biomedical and biomolecular applications. The Institute for Sustainability is hosting popular workshops, web-based discussions and the announcement of the results of an industry-wide survey of current corporate sustainability practices. The Nanoscale Science and Engineering Forum has, in just a few short years, experienced dramatic growth in membership and meeting programming.

We're gratified by the ways in which we're improving our services to the emerging areas of chemical engineering. But, I want to assure you that we are just as dedicated to improving our services and relevance to the CPI that remains the core of the discipline.

Recently, AIChE brought together senior chemical industry executives and government officials to help assess how AIChE can better support our members and the U.S. chemical enterprise in the face of significant challenges. Factors like globalization and energy prices have translated into a rapid shift from a positive to negative net balance of trade, a very significant decline in domestic capital spending, and dwindling investment in step-out R&D in key commodity processes, such as olefin production.

Of course, AIChE has a significant history of bringing companies together to solve shared problems, from process safety to accurate physical property data. What we heard in our conversations is that there are a number of important ways AIChE might strengthen its value to the CPI. These include providing credible facilitation of government and industry interaction to address regulatory uncertainty; assessing further threats to individual chemical processes from changes in energy prices and global environmental factors; studying the environmental, health and safety issues posed by nanotechnology; and, perhaps, leading a collaborative innovation process to re-invent the basic processes that form the foundation of the chemical enterprise.

We'll keep you posted. We're excited by ways we're finding to increase our relevance and service to all 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.