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Guest
Editorial

Should AIChE Do More Internationally?

It is probably appropriate that this editorial is being written in a hotel room in Shanghai. When posed with the opportunity to share some views on whether or not AIChE should have a greater presence internationally, I am honored, yet humbled. Honored for the chance, and yet humbled to share what I see, as I know that I am not seeing a complete picture. That is why, if AIChE does anything in this area, it will need the eyes, minds and perspectives of our membership. Not one person, nor one group, can possibly see the entire picture.

The headline question is complex. Nested inside the answer are questions that currently have no definitive answers and complicate the analyses. Questions like: "What is the future of the chemical engineering profession in the U.S.? What is going on with chemical engineering in the world? What is the role of globalization in the future of the U.S. chemical industry and how is it affecting academia?"

There are more good questions with no easy answers. However, the Board of Directors of your Institute is grappling with these questions, and we are working to address the future in a context that is fact-based. Notice that I did not say "begin to address," as work started over a decade ago to frame a position statement and to understand the impact of globalization on AIChE stakeholders. That work is solid and can be built upon by the hindsight of the last ten years and by some key facts and trends that can be studied, such as:

- In March 2006, the U.S. and India announced a \$30-million science and technology commission for joint research in promising areas like biotechnology.
- The U.S. government is funding the American Competitiveness Initiative to regenerate and sustain U.S. technological leadership.
- The only petroleum company that has a proven reserve replacement ratio of 100% over the last 13 years is headquartered outside of the U.S.
- The locus for large capital expenditures on industrial site and equipment growth is in the Middle East and Asia.
- China is investing heavily to secure and develop energy supplies in Africa.
- Many U.S.-based universities are opening up branch campuses in Asia, Europe and the Middle East.
- The money is there, but the people are not; industrial effort is not going forward in the developing world because of the shortage of trained human resources.
- Our sister organization, the Institution of Chemical Engineers, has a growing, internationally based membership and a different business model from AIChE.

When one looks at this information, and couples it with the realization that there are very bright and hard-working people all over the world, the answer, at least to me, says we need to look carefully at doing something differently. There is also a sense of urgency. We need to look *now*, and we need to commit a portion of our valuable resources to effectively lead those who are following us into the future.

Your leadership in AIChE has committed to do that. President John Chen has commissioned a Board team to address potential opportunities for AIChE in the international arena. *Membership engagement is essential.* We have laid out a plan to gain input from all interested stakeholders, and it started with two face-to-face sessions at the 2006 AIChE Spring Meeting. We will also be running a workshop at the June Leadership Conference in Houston (p. 59).

Do not worry if you have not been present at any of these events. We have set up an email address to take your comments and input. We are currently in the data collection stage, and would like to hear your thoughts by the middle of June. Send your input electronically to intlteaminput@aiche.org after May 15.

Deborah L. Grubbe, AIChE Board of Director