

## **Report of the Immediate Past President**

### **Council**

#### **Philadelphia 2012**

President Shkhashiri, fellow Councilors. Change is the only constant in life; and the times, "they are a-changing" for U.S. scientists. Federal support for research is on the decline, and that is not going to improve, no matter who wins in November or who wins in November four years from now. At Sandia, I see research support disappearing from national labs. The biomedical research field is no longer expanding. Assistant professors are not getting tenure because of the lack of research funding.

From 2007 to 2012, overall support for higher education by states decreased by 4 percent. Some states have decreased support radically, New Hampshire and Arizona have dropped by 32 percent, and in South Carolina the decrease is 24 percent. Research opportunities in the U.S. for chemistry graduates have been decreasing for a number of years. They aren't coming back any time soon.

ACS can advocate for increased research support and more investment in scientific education and universities, but that is not going to happen, not in the next five to ten years. Sputnik has crashed and burned. That era is over. Science and research is just another constituency like dairy farmers and steelworkers.

However, I am absolutely not advocating that we pack up and go home. In fact, I want to encourage ACS to take these changes as a challenge. We need to address this new world. In fact, ACS has already started. As research positions decrease, we are working harder to educate young chemists about alternative careers. As companies move offshore, we are educating our members on how to become entrepreneurs and create new businesses from exciting ideas. You can even see this in this week's *C&E News*.

In the future, there is even more we can do to address the changing times. For example, President Shkhashiri's Graduate Education Task Force can help prepare new Ph.D.'s for the future economic environment. As for all those brilliant foreign scientists who used to stay in the U.S. after they earned their doctorates here, we now need to make a greater effort to collaborate with them internationally so that we can still benefit from their creativity and insight. We can encourage undergraduate chemistry students to spend a semester or a year abroad so they will be ready for the global economy. We need to advocate for government to invest more wisely and efficiently in research, rather than just in more.

As of today, I know the U.S. does the best scientific research in the world. But without action, I worry about what might happen. Like many people, I find myself disappointed on nearly a daily basis with the politics of my country. But in 33 years of ACS membership, I have rarely been disappointed by ACS and have often been inspired by many of its members. ACS members are very smart people. We can meet this challenge.

ACS can and will change with the times, and that will make ACS even more valuable to our members, our country, and our future.

Mr. President, this concludes my report.