This past weekend (January 24-26) I attended the ACS Leadership Institute in Atlanta, Georgia. The focus of the Leadership institute was, as you might have guessed it, Leadership on your Local ACS Division, Committee’s, Regional Meeting Planning, and local Divisional groups. There were workshops dedicated to planning events, communication, working with and gaining volunteers along with time to network with other new or veteran local ACS officers from different states.

What defines a leader? What leadership characteristics do we observe within our places of work or local businesses we visit? I believe there are some concrete characteristics that define a leader, but I’ve wondered if there are any soft skills that we don’t necessarily rank as high within our leadership. Prior to volunteering to be a Chair for this Section of the ACS, I didn’t really visualize myself as a leader so I never volunteered for a position like this. I had a specific vision of what a leader was, and never had the confidence to put myself out there and take on a leadership role. I always wanted to take on a role that gave me more of a purpose to reach out within the community; whether it be STEM outreach in schools, helping others with career development or simply giving people a sense of community with fellow scientists in the area.

Taking on a leadership and project management role within my lab group gave me the assurance that I did have leadership skills such as task prioritization, communication skills to direct others on various construction projects, learning new technical skills, and a drive to accomplish the task at hand to get our group moved to new labs that we could be productive in. If you ask the people I worked with directly why I was a successful leader, they would tell you it was my people skills, making sure I knew each person’s name who worked on a project or introducing myself to anyone that came by so I could build a network for the future and get to know them as part of the team. That is an example of leading, yes, the other skills are important, but there are others that are just as important.

Taking on a leadership role is scary, but one thing I’ve noticed is that many people early in their career feel the same way; whether it is a person fresh out of school with a PhD or a student fresh out of their Undergraduate studies looking to get their foot in the door in an industry job followed by navigating their role within their group.

Leaders have humility, show vulnerability and are not ashamed to tell you they are just as scared as you were when you started out your journey leading a team or a project. Leaders communicate effectively, while understanding how to compose their own emotions while trying to read the emotions of those around them. Leaders didn’t all start out where they are, it took some determination and development along the way.

No matter the role you have within this organization: volunteer, committee member, local section officer, mentor, or outreach you can draw upon those characteristics to help you lead an event you are helping at or managing. We may not all have the confidence to step out and lead but we all can do so no matter how large or small the task.

On March 12th at 6PM, I invite you to a social networking and happy hour event at Chuck Lager’s in Pike Creek, Delaware. I hope to meet people from industry as well as our local colleges/universities!

Erin
Save the Date—April 22
Carothers Award Banquet & Reception

Lessons learned from nature:
From biomineralization to biomaterials

Recipient: Dr. Allison Campbell
Associate Director
Earth & Biological Sciences Directorate
Pacific Northwest National Laboratory

Time: 6-9 pm
6 pm Reception, 7 pm Dinner
8 pm Award Presentation

Location: DuPont Country Club
1001 Rockland Rd, Wilmington, DE 19803

Cost: $35/person
Free for students/unemployed members
thanks to a generous gift from the Labovský Family

Pre-registration required by April 8th.
Visit www.delawareacs.org to register

If your company would like to sponsor a table
(up to 10 seats), contact Erin Kennedy
(erin.m.kennedy@dupont.com)

The ACS National Meeting
Philadelphia from March 22-26

It will be easy to get to and you will not need a plane
ticket. This may be my last meeting but I agreed to
present a poster on Monday night.

Both the University of Delaware and the University of
Wisconsin will be hosting social hours on Sunday
evening. I am told that Professor John Burmeister will
attend the U.D. event, I hope to see you there.

Thanks for being an ACS member!
March 12
**Delaware ACS Happy Hour Networking Event**
Time: 6PM  
**Location:** Chuck Lagers American Tavern  
4500 Linden Hill Rd, Wilmington, DE 19808

March 22-26, Philadelphia
**The ACS National Meeting**
The Philadelphia section is working with ACS National to help spread the word about all the career offerings and trainings at the ACS National Meeting in Philadelphia this March.

**Take Charge of your Career**
At the ACS National Meeting in Philadelphia, several opportunities are available to grow your career.

**Personalized Career Advice**
(including mock interviews and résumé reviews at Career Navigator Live!) from Career Consultants

**Leadership Development**
Courses that give you the leadership skills necessary to excel in your career

**Professional Education**
Stay competitive and move ahead in your career with professional development and technical training courses

**Career Pathways Workshops**
Workshops that provide career guidance to up-and-coming and professional scientists as they navigate their futures.

To find complete schedule of these opportunities, please visit our National Meeting Career Development site.
DuPont’s Chestnut Run Campus

The Delaware News Journal on January 18th announced the sale of part of the campus to Delle Donne and Associates. This was shocking news to a chemist who worked there from 1957 to 1958 in the Textile Fibers Lab. I soon realized that taking over the company without a PhD was unlikely so I left for UNH.

DuPont will still own some of the property and lease back two buildings. “Delle Donne will develop the purchased property into research labs and offices for a new tenant, as well retail, residential and public common space, Roberts said.” I sure did not see this coming!
How to say goodbye to PFAS
This is the title of an article in the November 25 issue of C&E News by Cheryl Hogue. It refers to per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) that are very stable and thus do not easily break down in nature. The average C – H bond energy is 413 kJ/mole. It is 328 kJ/mole for the C – Cl bond but 485 kJ/mole for C – F, the cause of high stability.

Teflon, polytetrafluoroethylene, will outlive us all! The 3M company in Minnesota gave us “Scotchgard” to make carpets easy to clean. Now you can buy dental floss coated with PTFE.

There is now an international proposal from the Global PFAS Science Panel to solve this serious environmental problem. They have set up three categories of PFAS substances – Nonessential, Substitutable and Essential. The first group should be banned or phased out at once, such as coated dental floss plus all uses in cosmetics. The second group should be phased out as soon as substitutes are developed. The third group (Essential) includes Nafion membranes used in the chlor-alkali process. They replace toxic mercury cells. Research may eventually find a safer substitute.

There are now two bills in the House of Representatives (H.R. 535 and H.R. 2600) that attempt to solve this problem. Since every living creature contains these fluorocompounds in their blood, we all have reason to be concerned. Perhaps my PFAS content accounts for the fact that I have lost 25 marathons? Or maybe I was just born slow!

Dark Waters
Last month I mentioned having seen the movie. I am told that there was great rejoicing at DuPont when the film was not nominated for an Academy Award.

I have since purchased the book: “Exposure: Poisoned Water, Corporate Greed, and One Lawyer’s Twenty-Year Battle Against DuPont.” It provides much more detail than the film and so far, it is very interesting.
Chimists want to do chemistry. We are happiest when we are at the bench, surrounded by glassware, apparatus of all shapes and sizes and the ubiquitous safety equipment—the computer, performing simulations or modeling. It’s where we are at our best and feel fulfilled and productive. Duties that take us away from that familiar environment such as regulatory affairs, environmental impact assessments, safety procedures, or ethics training can be seen as an unwelcome distraction from the excitement of doing science. But those tasks are critical to how we pursue our science. Today’s chemists not only understand that but live by it. Safety and ethics are core to chemistry, front and center in chemists’ minds. And our science is all the better for it. There is no doubt that what we now produce is of higher quality and is more responsive to the world in which we live than ever before. We thrive with those challenges and opportunities.

Bibiana Campos-Seijo
Editor in Chief
Chemical & Engineering News