

## COMMENT

# Senior Chemists Committee: Examining and implementing our role

THOMAS R. BEATTIE, CHAIR, ACS SENIOR CHEMISTS COMMITTEE

In December 2015, the American Chemical Society's Senior Chemists Committee (SCC) held a strategic planning retreat in Washington, D.C. Ten SCC members, staff liaisons, and two facilitators worked for two days reviewing what we have accomplished in our first three years of existence, what we want to do in the future, and how to best achieve that.

As the newest of the ACS national committees, SCC wanted to validate what we have been doing and to make certain that our upcoming plans are achievable with the resources available and consistent with the ACS Strategic Plan. The outcome of the process resulted in the creation of a strategic plan with vision and mission statements, focused goals and strategies, and a road map for implementation with project champions identified.

So, what have we accomplished and where are we going?

Our most direct vehicle for two-way communication has been the "Newsletter for Senior Chemists." Initiated four years ago and sent biannually to 50,000 ACS members, it has become the most widely read of the ACS committee newsletters, as judged by the percentage of e-mails opened. It features news items, coverage of recent events and successful local section activities, announcements of upcoming events, and vignettes about

what senior chemists are doing with their time and energy. Contributions for the publication are welcomed, and comments and suggestions sent to us are read and responded to. We will be initiating a new series of articles regarding lesser-known museums and historical venues our members have encountered during their travels. We also are contemplating a new series featuring ACS international local chapters.

For three years, SCC has been participating in a "Student Speed Networking with Chemistry Professionals" event at ACS national meetings. It is an opportunity for chemistry professionals to share their knowledge and experiences with undergraduates. Mentoring and encouraging young prospective scientists is an important activity for us. Survey results from participating students and chemistry professionals are extremely favorable, and we are continuing to make tweaks to optimize the event's usefulness to our younger colleagues.

SCC was preceded by the Silver Circle Working Group and the Senior Chemists Task Force, both efforts toward demonstrating need within the society for a national committee for senior chemists. One activity created by the working group has been a breakfast event on Tuesday mornings at ACS national meetings, which is sponsored jointly by SCC and the ACS Development Office. It was envisioned as a continuing opportunity for seniors (and others who are interested) to meet, have breakfast, and hear a speaker presentation. Since 2005, this event has always sold out and has grown in size and significance, primarily because of our success in attracting top-notch speakers, including three Chemistry Nobel Laureates, five ACS presidents, and a diverse group of other distinguished presenters.

In 2015, at the ChemLuminary Awards celebration in Boston, we presented the first SCC-sponsored local section awards

for "Best Ongoing Senior Activity" and "Most Innovative Activity for Senior Chemists." This effort is one of several that SCC is making to continually engage with seniors at the local section level.

Another is our encouragement of local sections through grants to establish local senior chemists committees. Three years ago, we were aware of 14; now we know of 25, and we have a goal of reaching 35-40 within the next three years. We know from prior experience how much can be accomplished at the local level, and we plan to follow local progress and publicize successes as best practices to other local sections.

There are two other areas of engagement with seniors that we are creating. For years there has been a Senior Chemists Group on the ACS Network. We are now in the process of expanding it to be a more important point of engagement with our constituents. We envision an interactive contact site for everyone to use. Work is progressing, and rollout is scheduled for later this year.

Regional ACS meetings, which are very location-specific, could be another contact point for reaching out. We have found scant relevant information available regarding senior activities. This year, we are engaging with the officers of this month's ACS Northwest Regional Meeting in June and the ACS Midwest Regional Meeting in October on a trial basis.

In these initial three years, SCC has made significant progress consistent with our vision and mission. In my upcoming three years as SCC chair, I am looking toward continuing that work with this dedicated group of SCC members. If you have comments or suggestions regarding our progress in executing our strategic plan, please contact me at [beattietr@aol.com](mailto:beattietr@aol.com).

Views expressed on this page are those of the author and not necessarily those of ACS.



## Strategic plan

- ▶ **Our vision:** Improving lives using the knowledge and experience of senior chemists.
- ▶ **Our mission:** To address and support the needs and ambitions of senior chemists and to utilize their experience and knowledge.
- ▶ **Strategic goals:** 1. Develop and implement an active senior network to provide two-way communication. 2. Increase the number of local section senior chemists committees to 35-40 in the next three years. 3. Develop activities that engage senior chemists to use their expertise and experience.