

Nancy B. Jackson

President-elect Candidate Statement

Chemistry is essential to the developments we need to make in energy, sustainability, health, and security. But science in general and the central science of chemistry in particular are not adequately valued by the public. The chemical sciences are the lowest funded of the physical sciences at NSF. Discover Magazine, a popular science magazine, covers eight categories of science - none of which are chemistry.

This is not just a U.S. problem. Chemistry suffers an image problem everywhere. Concern about this image problem led chemical societies around the world to launch the idea for the UN to designate 2011 as the International Year of Chemistry. Whoever wins this election will be ACS President during the International Year of Chemistry. If elected, I will take ACS to a leadership position in the International Year of Chemistry, partnering with our sister societies around the world to make the most of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to improve the image of the chemical sciences. I will use the International Year of Chemistry to demonstrate chemistry's value and the need for chemistry to address society's most challenging issues.

Bringing Science to the Public. Support we receive for chemical education and research from the public and policy makers is dependent upon how much the public values chemistry. Nothing could be more important to the health of our profession than communicating effectively with the public. Presently, the most common method of communication to the public about science is through the mainstream media, but traditional science journalism is a disappearing profession. Even ACS has followed this trend, letting go several science journalists during the recent ACS staff layoff.

With traditional media dwindling, a new paradigm for informing the public about science needs to develop, and some have suggested that universities and non-profit science organizations should fill the gap, particularly relying on the internet. If elected President, I will lead the Society in investigating how ACS can take a leadership role in new ways of communicating science news to the public.

Research. As President, I will be a strong advocate for federal support of research in chemistry. One aspect of the national dialog on scientific research where I would contribute would be the role of the national laboratories as important national scientific assets. Unfortunately, most of the labs are struggling. A research and development agenda needs to be developed for the labs that does not compete with either industry or universities but allows for collaboration with each. If elected ACS President, I will address the future health of the national labs on the national science agenda.

Education. Last year, my son had a science teacher in high school who didn't like chemistry or doing experiments. Unfortunately, this is not an uncommon experience.

ACS needs to continue to actively support high school chemistry and chemistry teachers.

The recent transfer of the Hach Foundation to ACS gives the Society an unprecedented opportunity to advance high school chemistry education. At the undergraduate level, the programs by NSF, the ACS Petroleum Research Fund, and others that encourage and support undergraduate research should be strengthened further. Opportunities for international research experience for undergraduates and graduate students should be increased. Science is global, and we need to prepare our students for the careers they will have. Chemical education, science education, and the value of education in general will be a strong priority for me if elected ACS President.

In our culture, the contributions of science are undervalued. Chemistry is near the bottom of the sciences in the public's interest. As we know, the irony is that chemistry is essential for virtually every other science to flourish. It is time that we resolved to take whatever steps are necessary to inform the public of the importance--and wonder--of the central science of chemistry. If elected President, I will use the International Year of Chemistry to its fullest to communicate about chemistry to the public and will explore novel ways ACS can inform the public about the crucial role chemistry must play in our future. ACS technical divisions and local sections can play an important role in addressing ACS's agenda.

I encourage you to visit my web site at NancyJackson.org which has more information on my vision for the future of chemistry and the ACS. I ask for your vote for ACS President-elect and promise in return to give all my energy and enthusiasm to improving the image of chemistry in order to ensure a vital future for chemistry.