

Thinking about Champions

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ABSTRACT: Highlights of Volume 92 of the *Journal of Chemical Education* are discussed, and contributors to the *Journal* are acknowledged.

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In sports, a measure of success is often simply whether one wins or loses. In our popular culture, it is unfortunate that this has become the ultimate and singular goal. After a recent rivalry game in U.S. college football, online posts suggested that the field goal kicker, who missed an attempt with seconds left in the game, commit suicide. In another league closer to home, a first-year quarterback was booed by the home field fans after a series of attempts went unsuccessful. This is not a civil way to treat 20-year-old student–athletes. Isn't it just a game for our amusement? Fortunately, not all of the anecdotes are so grim. A colleague from Chicago enjoys the game of baseball, particularly with his 12-year-old son. One of the Chicago home teams had a successful season, made the major league baseball playoffs, and gave their fans some hope that a century-old losing curse was about to be lifted. That did not happen: the Chicago team lost all the playoff games in a “sweep” to a New York team. But the dad is originally from New York and a fan of that team. Maybe there is something credible about bad luck originating in Chicago. When the 2015 World Series ended with Kansas City defeating the New York team, my colleague commented that he and his son would have congratulated Kansas City fans if only they knew any. Good sportsmanship, good parental mentoring, and an optimistic view toward the next season.

It is that optimism about the next cycle that provides a connection to the *Journal*. The last issue of a volume gives one the opportunity to reflect on the success of the previous “season” and what benchmarks would correspond to a “championship”. The *Journal* continues to receive submissions from across the world, potential contributions representing the highest caliber scholarly work or research. The year 2015 represents Volume 92, which ends the year with over 400 published items contained in over 2100 pages, virtually all peer-reviewed content. Several items were distinguished as ACS Editors' Choice publications: Raker, Reisner, Smith, Stewart, Crane, Pesterfield, and Sobel^{1,2} for work on foundational and in-depth inorganic coursework; Cooper, Williams, and Underwood³ for student understanding of molecular forces; Holme, Luxford, and Brandriet⁴ for defining conceptual understanding in general chemistry; and Davis⁵ for a discussion of the kilogram as a revised unit. Many others deserve similar accolades.

The peer-review process requires a large number of reviewers, typically four per manuscript, but often more, especially when the content topic or revision process requires

specific expertise. We are grateful to these individuals for their service in reviewing and for their insight into the range of topics that are typically submitted to *JCE*. Besides the content in the traditional areas of chemistry, biochemistry, and chemical engineering, experts in pedagogy, education, and cognitive science are often required. This effort is supervised by the Associate Editors, who are asked to guide manuscripts through the review process. We acknowledge the efforts of Arthur Halpern (Indiana State University, emeritus), Cheryl Frech (University of Central Oklahoma), Deanna Cullen (Whitehall High School), John Risley (University of North Carolina at Charlotte), Gregory Rushton (SUNY–Stony Brook University), Marcy Towns (Purdue University), and Renée Cole (University of Iowa); we welcome an additional colleague who soon will be joining the group of Associate Editors and brings expertise in inorganic chemistry, material science, and undergraduate education. This group serves as the interface between authors, reviewers, the Editor, and the staff. A successful team requires making tough decisions during review; a championship team demands a higher level of scrutiny, which makes the process even more thorough. The *Journal* staff works tirelessly behind the scenes and often without much recognition. Just because an author clicks the “submit” button does not mean a manuscript is ready for external review: it must meet certain criteria, must contain required components that are specified in the author guidelines, and must provide required information and permissions. Before a manuscript gets assigned to an Associate Editor to begin external review, it is subjected to an internal review involving several steps and three individuals. Other staff members provide comments about the text and graphics during the review process. Finally, following technical editing, accepted manuscripts are published online as Articles ASAP (As Soon As Publishable) that are assigned to an issue, still a physical entity with a cover and table of contents. In addition to the editorial process, the management of people and resources requires time and effort. These roles (and far more, which are necessary to accomplish the required details) are accomplished by Bernadette Caldwell, Jayne Plymale, Jon Holmes, Mary Saecker, Randall Wildman, and Sullins Benson; we gratefully acknowledge their effort on behalf of the *Journal*.

Starting in summer 2014, a series of changes were made in the editorial process. The *Journal* has phased out separate copyediting and graphics editing steps, integrating them into

the revision process. The last of those transitional steps is now in place. Attention to detail concerning the manuscript requirements (in some cases, specific and prescriptive for certain manuscript types), the writing and organization, the accuracy of content, and appropriate citation and attribution are still hallmarks of *JCE*; integrating them into the review and revision steps are part of the strategy to bring *Journal* content to readers much quicker. We continue to adjust the details of our process to make that happen.

Future plans include planning and publishing special issues; one which will appear early in 2016 about chemical information has been organized by guest editor (and member of the *JCE* Editorial Advisory Board) Grace Baysinger, Stanford University chemistry librarian. Another special issue is already being organized around the theme of polymers in chemistry education. Details and a call for papers will appear subsequently. The *Journal* has begun to consider some comprehensive articles—short reviews of content, pedagogy, and cognitive science related to the teaching and learning of chemistry. Such submission ideas are vetted by the Editor, often before the manuscript is written and certainly before it is submitted. As the *Journal* proceeds in this endeavor, the short review may become a manuscript type. Additional announcements will be forthcoming.

Volume 92 and the year 2015 have been successes, judging by several criteria, some of which were discussed here. However, your Editor continues to look forward, striving to make improvements and to make the *Journal* even more successful. We encourage you to join in creating a “championship team” by writing for, reviewing, reading, and otherwise supporting the *Journal*.

And just to be on the safe side of avoiding any “curses” on *JCE*, no Chicago goats were subject to any disrespect during the writing of this editorial.

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Notes

Views expressed in this editorial are those of the author and not necessarily the views of the ACS.

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