



**Abstract: On the CHED Program**

**Committee, all the women are strong, all the men are good looking, and all the Programs are above average. How did this come to be? What are the joys of programming in Lake Woebegone? The woes? What if Mr. Frumble wants his casserole served precisely at 4 pm on Sunday, or if Mrs. Frumble wants to bring her casserole but doesn't live in Lake Woebegone? This paper, the Programming Home Companion, will walk you through our committee's work at National ACS Meetings, keeping in mind that even if you leave Lake Woebegone, people still like to attend a good potluck.**

In Lake Woebegone, that which may appear simple is actually layered with complexity. Deeply rooted, the complexities extend far back through the generations of those who have lived there. As far as anybody can tell (and perhaps folks even relish the thought), these complexities will extend into the future as well. Yet in spite of the complexity, or perhaps because of it all, the good people of Lake Woebegone still are able to make good things happen. So it is with the members of the CHED Programming Committee.

As in Lake Woebegone, life at national meetings may appear quite simple. You register, you plan a presentation, you submit your abstract, you make travel arrangements, and then you attend. Simple, huh? Sure, there are some details to attend to, perhaps freeing yourself from family and work obligations, getting coverage for your classes, and (of course) preparing your poster or talk. Maybe scrounging up travel funds for yourself or for your students. And maybe preparing an agenda for a committee meeting. But you know the routine.

Things that appear simple can actually be far more complex. Think about, for example, a church potluck. This sort of large extended family drama plays planning and chaos off against each other. The planning comes in because each person gets his or her dish carefully prepared, brings it, serves it, and hopefully helps clean it up afterwards. The remainder of the event, however, is a study in chaos. Too many string bean casseroles and folks will grumble. And if somebody promises an apple strudel and fails to show up, tongues will wag. Nobody had better sneeze into someone else's salad. Long remembered was the man who brought the dense quadruple layer cake that was supposed to be a lighter fare after the meal. Even longer remembered was the woman who brought five different macaroni casseroles when she was at most supposed to bring two or three. And if the room for the potluck is too small, too hot,

too cold, or too stuffy, nobody gets much of a chance to enjoy the food, no matter how good it actually is.

The site also contributes its share to the chaos. Since those in Lake Woebegone select a variety of locations to host their get-togethers, the cooking equipment, the serving utensils, the seating, and the room size may turn out to be just perfect or not . Those eating may find themselves in a tiny and misshapen room (remember New York in 2001?). The church may even have a swimming pool that some absent-minded parishioners are in danger of falling into (San Diego in 2005). And the weather may be so beastly hot and humid that nobody really wants to do much of anything (Boston in August 2002; New Orleans, and Washington DC most every summer).



The good people at Lake Woebegone, of course, do not complain loudly in public. But they do whisper in small groups. Listen in. Did you hear the one about how some of us frankly hoped that a speaker or two might fall into the swimming pool outside the Port Hole Room



in San Diego? Folks really do try our patience. Consider, for example, the parishioner that *only* can serve his casserole on a Sunday afternoon and is incensed that we might even suggest scheduling him on a Thursday morning. He just doesn't get it: *every* dish cannot be served on Monday. Yes, we realize that his attendees may choose not to show up on Thursday. And yes, we realize that he is a prominent citizen in the community. But no, we are bound by the law of the land ( even programming ) that requires us to hold potlucks every day of the week. Well, not quite. As of yet I haven't gotten to schedule one on a Friday, but I do have some candidates should the opportunity arise.



OK, you get the idea. Planning and chaos also go hand-in-hand at National ACS Meetings. The work of [the CHED Program Committee](#), with the help of its committee members and friends, boils down to *planning the chaos* . Presently, as well as over the years, the Program



Committee has been blessed with a great group of people. This is no accident, as we as a group have worked hard to recruit new members. Check our [committee roster](#) .

You will find diversity in terms of institution, age, area of study, and admittedly sense of humor as well. In common we have a can-do attitude, a love of short meetings (why take two hours when you can do it in an hour and a half?), and a sense of humor. The latter item is essential to keep the programming woes at bay. And we like parties. Feel free to ask us about one the one that we threw for **Frank Torre** when he retired as program chair (shhhh) violating a couple of hotel rules and regs.

Speaking of past program committee chairs, check [the list](#) . If I do say so, this committee consistently has had good leaders people who both put in the effort to get the job done as well as take time to pass on their wisdom. For example, check out the [documents for symposium organizers](#) posted on the DivCHED web site. Check the document posted by Harry Pence on [How to Chair a Session](#) . Information such as this helps each new generation of contributors.



Speaking of good people, those who help us in CHED include many folks at the ACS as well. These include **Michael Tinnese** and **Terri Taylor** in the ACS Office of Education, **LaTrease Garrison**(left) and **Andrea Bennett** (center) who shepherd the undergraduate posters, **John Sophos** who has been our trusty man-on-the-scene in the ACS Operations Office for the past few meetings, **Richard Love** who keeps OASYS up and cranking, **Nelufar Mohajari** (right) who together with **Marvin Jones**, **Rico Gore** , and **Theresa Laranang-Mutlu** handles the ACS Awards (and keeps the awardees in line), and of course all the good folks in Food&Bev who make sure that we all get fed and watered.

And speaking of the wisdom gathered over time, sometimes the whispers of the program committee sound more like the strong voices in the Lake Woebegone choir. Some even refer to the refrains of the program committee as mantras. Ever intoned, these mantras keep the meeting and program balanced, focused and perhaps even sane. Here are our three favorites. Feel free to chant them to a melody of your choice. For example, when it comes to the program at national meetings:

***Never promise anything to anyone. Never promise anything to anyone.***

Of course we in programming try to meet as many requests as we can. In fact, we are actually pretty good at it. But we know better than to promise what we cannot deliver. Best to err on the side of caution, as unmet promises really annoy the good folks of Lake Woebegone. Furthermore, favoritism wins members on this committee no points. Speaking of fairness, this is the one thing that previous CHED Program Chair **Frank Torre** warned me about, both in appearance and in actuality. So for the programming record, no matter who you are, you need to keep your talk within the time limits. And you cannot have the best spot on the program. Oops, one exception. If you are organizing a symposium for a national ACS award, you do get first dibs. Even here, though, all the award winners cannot present at the same time (although believe me they have tried). This next mantra is for the chairs at the helm of each national program. Chant this one (and pray that your In Box does not overflow):

*Copy everybody on everything. Copy everybody on everything.*

At the risk of clogging our In Boxes, this committee freely shares information. In fact, keeping conversations in the open is practically a requirement of the job of creating a National Meeting. There are simply too many details that need to be tracked, and with more eyes watching it is less likely that we miss something that is important to somebody. In addition, copying provides a trail that we sometimes need to retrace in order to fix a glitch. Speaking of glitches, the opportunities are myriad. Think of hundreds of abstracts. Then multiply this by the numbers of presenters, organizers and presiders, and with all their special personal requests and equipment. The opportunities to screw up are endless. For example, at the recent San Francisco meeting (usually small in the fall), CHED had over 500 submissions. At Atlanta, the total was 1382. Yikes!

I credit this one to veteran Program Committee member **Laura Pence**. It reflects the realities of programming we simply cannot do everything, nor can we let all the good folks of Lake Woebegone do just anything they want to.

*No, no, no. No, no, NO!*

Just say no. No, you cannot have more than 25 minutes for your talk, and actually you may need to make do with 20 minutes. No, you cannot have an internet connection in this hotel (although back in the 90s, WWW symposium organizer **Mark Freilich** and I had a grand time running up a phone bill for the first ever CHED symposium on teaching with the WWW). No, you cannot switch your talk from Wednesday to Monday (but I will put you on Friday if you keep pestering me). No, you cannot present without registering for the meeting. And no, you cannot do any demos that might set the hotel curtains on fire. Saying no up front is much simpler. Although we like to say yes, being realistic keeps us from getting distracted from the enormous task

at hand, putting together two national meetings with a total of 2000 presenters each year!

Finally now, what you all wait for each Saturday evening,

***The News from Lake Woebegone.***

**Item #1: The GSSPC**



The GSSPC has been up and running for several years now. Check the GSSPC charter one of the best written meeting planning manuals out there. Thanks to the work of Dottie Miller and her team of graduate students at UIUC and myself, CHED was awarded a DAC (Divisional Activities Committee) innovative planning grant in 2005 to further the programming of the GSSPC. And thanks to Jerry Bell , Marta Gmurczyk , Marjorie Caserio , and Corrie Kuniyoshi , at the OGE ([Office of Graduate Education](#) at the ACS), we have continued interest, funding, and publicity in this group.

At the upcoming Chicago meeting, a GSSPC (Ohio State University) is presenting an all graduate student planned, implemented and led symposium entitled *Exploring and Exploiting Nature with Biomimetics* . Here is the Chicago meeting [publicity flyer](#) one that sets a high standard. At the fall meeting in Boston, another GSSPC (Purdue University) is presenting a symposium *Finding your catalyst - Lowering the barrier from graduate school to industry* . Again, here is another excellent [publicity flyer](#) .

Which reminds me - do you know a group of graduate students who would like to take the reigns in 2008? Let us know.

**Item #2: High School Program Logistics**

Over the years, the High School Program has had its highs and lows. Finding a local teacher to coordinate the talks and publicity is one of the key factors. California meeting sites have been the most difficult; in contrast, Chicago, Boston, and DC have been almost a walk in the park.

In the past two years, I have implemented some changes in the High School Program that seem to be serving us all well:

1. Switching the program from an off-site workshop to on-site as part of the CHED Technical Program. All talks are now entered into OASYS. We have a template now for the program that can be passed from meeting to meeting.

2. Holding the HS Program on Sunday. No day is ideal, and I just made the choice that seemed to do the least harm. But Meetings & Expositions sweetened the deal by granting CHED an exception from the Even Programming Rule for the Sunday time slot. We can hold the High School Program then without bumping one of our regular symposia.
3. Holding the HS-College Interface Luncheon on-site as well. This has saved the HS planners the grief of finding a restaurant off site. In turn, we can work with the ACS Food & Beverage group to get all the lunches lined up. Same for morning coffee breaks.
4. Having the teachers register and get badges, just like all meeting attendees. The price, \$69 for the full meeting for any HS teacher, non-member or member, is far lower than any other attendees pay. Nonetheless, for some teachers this is an obstacle.

#### High School Program Funding

First the bad news. Even though they were highly successful, meeting co-chairs **Stacey Bretz** and **Renee Cole** well remember the travails of raising money for the HS Program in Atlanta 2006. So do veteran committee members and meeting co-chairs **Vic Shanbhag** and **Con Bergo** (Washington DC 2005). And of course more recently so do **Boyd Earl** and **Joe March**. And I even suspect that Committee long-timers **Koni Stone** and **Cinzia Muzzi** (San Diego 2005) may have some recurring nightmares about funds for the HS Program. Talk about stress.



But hot off the presses just this summer, **Michael Tinneland** reports some very, very good news: *Texas Instruments has agreed to sponsor the HS day programs at a rate of \$5,000 for the foreseeable future. I have been talking to Michael Osborne from TI about this opportunity and he was able to confirm TI's support to me here at BCCE. This should be a major relief to the HS program organizers in the future.*

**Mort Hoffman**, former CHED Program Chair and past Division Chair (aka Old Goat), quickly saw the possibilities: *\$5,000 for each national meeting can be made to go a long way; it will allow us to subsidize the cost of the HS/college interface luncheon, provide a nice continental breakfast at the start of the day, offer coffee breaks, and publicize the event broadly. Best of all, it will mean that the meeting and program organizers will not have to dig \$\$ from other sources. We can now ask local sections to support their teachers' registration fees rather than asking for a cash contribution, which I am absolutely certain they would prefer to do in the first place. Perhaps we should take a small amount of the TI funds (say, 15%) to pay a portion of the registration fees (say, 50%) of teachers whose local sections cannot support*

*them. We should be able to provide support for about 20 teachers that way. Alternatively, for just about the same amount of \$\$, we could provide 20 subscriptions to Chemistry Teacher Connection (CHED membership and JCE access to HS material). We have a terrific opportunity to be very creative.*

Mort said it well. Now that the pressure is off us as solicitors, we now have a terrific opportunity to be creative. Please send us your ideas.

#### **Item #3: High School Day Task Force**

**Michael Tinneland** is currently coordinating the work of the HS Day Task Force, a group that convened for the first time at the SF National Meeting. He also set up a wiki site at <http://acs-hsday-ops-manual2006.wikispaces.com/space/changes> at which he has posted the background information on the progress of the high school program on that site.

Members of the task force include: **Stacey Lowery Bretz, Renee Cole, Allene Johnson, Joan Laredo Liddell, Barbara Sitzman, Laura Slocum**, the San Francisco, Chicago, and Boston meeting co-chairs and High School Chairs, the CHED Program Chair, and ACS staff liaisons Michael Tinneland and Terri Taylor.

#### **Item #4: Altar calls we need YOU**

If you have always been wanting to join the CHED Program Committee, just drop me a line. As a lowly committee chair I do not have the final word, but I can put in a good one for you. Terms are three years, and we hope that you can attend at least one of the two national meetings each year. We not only welcome newbies we depend on them to make and carry on traditions!

#### **A Secret of Lake Woebegone: There is a Hell**

Yes, the good folks in Lake Woebegone know about hell as well as heaven. Originally I had titled this paper as *The CHED Program Committee. Programming Heaven or Hell?* But not wanting to scare future members away, I decided to abandon it. But for those of you who have read this far, we now reveal all. The hell part really is quite simple. We as volunteers to the Division (and most of us with full-time jobs elsewhere to boot) must meet the demands of a punishing National Meeting schedule. Actually as chair, it is not one meeting at a time but rather three. Together with San Francisco meeting co-chairs **Boyd Earl** and **Joe March**, we are about to run the program at the San Francisco meeting. Together with Chicago meeting co-chairs **Wayne Jones**, **George Bodner**, and I am preparing to shepherd about 1300 abstracts through OASYS. And with Boston meeting co-chairs **Maria Oliver-Hoyo** and **Ingrid Montes**, I am lining up the symposium organizers and the high school program. This

reminds me: OASYS is now open for Chicago meeting . As they say in Chicago, vote early and often.

The punishing part comes because the deadlines are real (kind of like April 15<sup>th</sup> for taxes) and come in endless succession. Symposia listings are due in OASYS. Presenter abstracts are due. The preliminary program is due. The final program is due. Food and beverage requests are due. Room requests are due. Confirmations of food, beverage, and rooms are due. Attendance reports are due. Articles to the CHED Newsletter, to JCE, and to the ACS Speakers Bureau are due. The devil is in the details.

Furthermore, other people's problems become our problems. I missed the deadline. Can I still submit an abstract? I know it is after the deadline, but I need to add an author to my talk. Can you do this for me? My student just got a travel grant, so can we do a late poster submission? I forgot to tell you that Wednesday morning I have Council meeting so this time slot won't work for a symposium. I need to withdraw my abstract. I need a letter from CHED so that I can obtain travel funds. Can you get me this by the end of the week ?

Editorial comment. In truth, I and the meeting co-chairs don't really need to answer the zillions of email messages that we get after OASYS closes (about 300 per meeting by last count). *But we in programming are the public face of the Division of Chemical Education. Across the board, students and faculty probably interact more with our committee than any other. To the extent that we can answer promptly and as cheerfully as we can muster, we say to our Division members that we are here for you and care about your programming needs.*

And of course it works the other way around. If we miss a step, our problems become other people's problems. I forgot the coffee for the HS teachers. Can you help me to order it? I forgot that you told me this was co-sponsored with WCC. Let me see if I can get somebody at ACS to add this. You asked for tables set in rounds and they set up squares. Maybe I can find somebody in Operations who can fix this. Sorry, I didn't get you that newsletter article you needed in time. Will the end of the week work for you ?

#### **Bottom Line**

One thing is clear. Programming for national meetings truly involves a talented and fun group of people in the Division of Chemical Education. To the wider community, we are indeed the face of the Division. We interact regularly with folks, including the hundreds of undergraduate students who present posters, the high school teachers who attend, the graduate students who are now planning their own symposia start-to-finish.

We assist presenters who submit abstracts to OASYS, those who forget to submit their abstracts or submit something in error. We help symposium organizers put their speakers in order (and remind them to schedule intermissions as well). We take your complaints to heart, fixing things as we are able. And we try to remember to express our gratitude to the many people who make our programs a success, including those staff members at the ACS who help us.

So let me end by saying thank you. It cannot be said often enough in Lake Woebegone.

---

**CONFICHEM** on-line conferences are organized by the ACS Division of Chemical Education's Committee on Computers in Chemical Education ([CCCE](#)).

---