

by Harvey W. Blanch, Chair



The Unit Operations lab was the scene for a recent Dow training course for plant operators from their Pittsburg, CA facilities. Recently retired Fred Voorhis (right) came back to help them run the lab class.



We were pleased that as the clocks passed midnight on New Year's eve, only the oldest of the department's computers showed any signs of weakness. The full employment program for Cobol programmers appeared to be successful. There were sounds of destruction, however, in the basement of Gilman Hall, as the renovations for the new

Pitzer Center for Theoretical Chemistry got underway. The student machine shop has moved and the research laboratories will now house computers rather than NMR spectrometers. Our undergraduate Unit Operations laboratory will remain in the sub-basement, however. With all the building activity, we are all looking forward to quieter times on the upper levels of Gilman.

There were several new year additions to the department. Alex Katz completed his post-doctoral studies in Strasburg and has joined the department as Assistant Professor this semester. He is teaching the undergraduate kinetics and reactor design course with Enrique Iglesia this spring. Henrik Wallman also joins the department as Senior Lecturer and Academic Coordinator. Henrik and David Graves developed and co-taught the new Transport Laboratory course last semester for the first time. The course has a number of new experiments, including some computer simulations. Student response to this course was very positive. Henrik will teach the process design course and be involved in the unit operations laboratory as well. We anticipate revising and upgrading many of the experiments in this course in the next few semesters.

It is a pleasure to announce a new senior faculty member in the department. Nitash Balsara joins us as Professor in July this year. Nitash's research interests are in polymeric materials characterization and synthesis, and in the study of polymer phase transitions. He will complement and strengthen our materials and polymers program, and already has collaborations with Arup Chakraborty underway—a meeting of theory and experiment. Nitash's exciting research programs have been recognized by the award of the Dillon Medal of the American Physical Society Award for Polymer Physics in 1997. Nitash is currently Professor in the Chemical Engineering department at the Polytechnic University of Brooklyn. We will feature details of his research activities later this summer. In addition, the department is seeking to fill another faculty position this semester.

Jay Keasling's accomplishments were recognized by his recent election to the American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering (AIMBE), in the class of 2000. He will also serve as an editorial board member for the American



Last fall's G. N. Lewis lecture was given by Prof. Robert Langer from MIT, shown here with chemical engineering professor David Schaffer and his friend Linda Hinh, and chair Blanch. The lecture is sponsored in part by the Ford Motor Company.

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Jay Keasling

Society for Microbiology journal *Applied and Environmental Microbiology* for a three-year term beginning this year. Enrique Iglesia has been selected to deliver the 2000 Harry Fair Memorial Lecture at the School of Chemical Engineering and Materials Science of the University of Oklahoma in Spring 2000. Established in 1975, each year the lectureship features a distinguished professor in Chemical Engineering. Susan Muller was an invited speaker at a one-day symposium in honor of Professor Robert Bird, at the chemical engineering department of Texas A&M University on February 4, 2000. The symposium was intended to recognize Professor Bird's numerous contributions in the area of polymer kinetic theory and to highlight new directions in polymer science and engineering.

Susan Muller is also taking a sabbatical leave this semester, spending it at her alma mater, MIT. Arup Chakraborty will be a Miller Professor for the semester, relinquishing his duties as vice-chair to Jay Keasling. Jay has already instituted a monthly Friday get-together of graduate students and faculty that promises to provide some far-ranging discussions between the students and faculty on many issues not related to engineering. ♦



Enrique Iglesia

