

by Paul A. Bartlett, Chair



Approaching the end of my tour of duty as chair, I take the occasion of my last newsjournal to discuss some of the challenges that I didn't anticipate when I took on this job, as well as some of the unique features of our Department that I didn't appreciate until I did.

A Major Challenge: Competition

The first pang of anxiety I felt when I stepped into this position was provoked by some of my colleagues, who pointed out that the department I had just assumed leadership of could only move in one direction if our ranking were to change. I confess I didn't know how much of a challenge it would prove to be to keep us on top. As you all recognize, Berkeley occupies a unique position in the hierarchy of institutions of higher education: we are the only state school ranked in the top ten, taken across all disciplines. Our position as the top chemistry department is even more unusual, since one has to go quite a way down the NRC ranking to find the next state institution. I remember taking comfort in the fact that I was at a public institution in the 1980s, when income to the state, and thus funding to the University of California, pretty much kept pace with the rampant inflation and it was the private institutions that were struggling to keep up. Now, however, the situation is reversed: a booming economy across the nation is having a disparate effect on the private institutions and the public ones, for the simple reason that endowment income now increases more rapidly than state budgets.

The direct consequence of this turnaround is stiffer competition as we seek to appoint new faculty, and more aggressive attempts to lure away the colleagues who are here. There is no better form of flattery, but it does not make it easy for the chair! Our competitors, of course, are the other top-ranked, and private, institutions. The currency in this competition is not limited to faculty salaries, but is seen most dramatically in the better facilities and increased levels of research support that a burgeoning endowment income makes possible. The local housing market, and the steps that are needed to enable faculty to enter it, provide an additional example of the differing abilities of private and public institutions to respond.

The way to maintain our leadership is obviously to become more 'private'—to find additional ways to fund the modern facilities, extra renovations, and new initiatives that will invigorate our research and teaching programs—while



Engineering Professor Adam Arkin now has a joint faculty appointment in Chemistry. He specializes in designing tools for understanding cellular biochemical networks.

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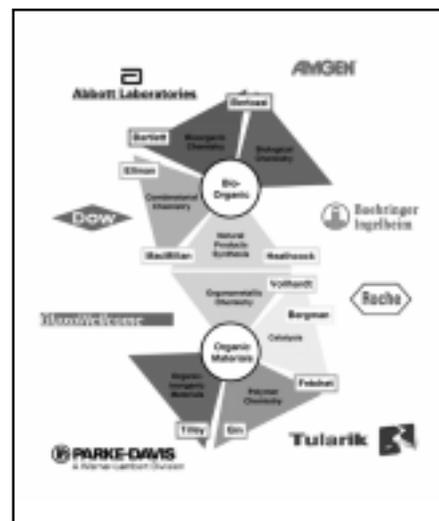
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maintaining our public trust. You have read about some of these initiatives in recent newsjournals, and I am happy to report that two in particular are underway and starting to fulfill their missions. The Center for New Directions in Organic Synthesis, which already has eight corporate members, is providing student support as well as equipment and renovation funds. We are looking forward to the educational exchange that it will facilitate through summer internships for students and a graduate course to enable our students to become more familiar with the range of research projects in industry. At the same time, the Pitzer Center for Theoretical Chemistry has been created with a different mission and a different source of support, namely from generous donations from the Pitzer family and their Foundation, and matching funds from the University as part of the seismic project. This Center will bring together, for the first time, the outstanding research groups in theoretical chemistry within the College in modern facilities that will facilitate interactions between them.

On the broader campus level, the College of Chemistry is a component of the recently announced Health Sciences Initiative, which will bring major new buildings and other facilities at the interface of the physical and biological sciences.

A Major Advantage: Our Collaborative Environment

Berkeley is a big place, and our Chemistry Department is the largest in the nation, but as a faculty member in the organic chemistry group, I always thought that we were pretty interactive. What I have come to appreciate as chair is how pervasive this spirit of cooperation is at Berkeley. It extends across the disciplinary interfaces within the Department, and it reaches out to other departments across campus and even to UC San Francisco: there are currently eleven chemistry faculty members with formal appointments in other departments, and this will surely increase as interdisciplinary programs continue to grow. The tight connection between Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and the campus is nowhere more evident than in Chemistry. We benefit from the support and facilities that are available through the DOE-funded programs on the Hill, and they benefit from the stimulating campus environment and the continued influx of new ideas and faculty-staff scientists. The mutual gain from this interaction is seen at almost every interface; joint initiatives facilitated by the LBNL connection bring together chemists and biologists, chemists and physicists, chemists and materials scientists - you name it!



The new Center for New Directions in Organic Synthesis (CNDOS) has been successful in garnering corporate support and already has eight members.

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