

## **POLY Strategic Plan Document 2006**

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### **I. Executive Summary**

This strategic plan presents the vision and strategic themes that will drive the planning agenda of POLY for the next 5 years. This plan was developed following the strategic planning process introduced to the divisions by the ACS and the earlier plan put together by K. Carter in 2004. The intention is for this plan to enable POLY to grow in the future to maintain continuity of focus within the division. It is to be a “*living*” document that will be updated to recognize changes in the environment.

### **II. Vision for POLY**

Serve scientists and professionals world-wide by facilitating connectivity, adding value by organizing resources, and inspiring creativity in macromolecular science and education.

### **III. Division Analysis**

A SWOT analysis was done to determine our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This was an important consideration in putting together the plan

#### **Strengths**

- POLY is 4th largest division in ACS
- Internationally recognized as a leading professional society
- Strong programming
- Financially solid, allowing creativity
- Strong industrial base for our science
- Energetic long-term volunteers with marketable skills
- New leadership every year, giving new perspectives
- Good Business Office
- Willing to take chances
- Outreach to other professional organizations and regional meetings
- Diversity of services
- Successful workshops
- Publications/Polymer Preprints
- Networking
- Jobs Database
- Website and listserv
- POLY Newsletter

#### **Weakness**

- Perceived lack of uniqueness, relevance, and/or attractiveness
- Shrinking industrial base
- Struggling with different cultures (academic versus industrial)

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- Need interface with emerging fields
- Student outreach - Academics/Communication
- Diverse – hard to satisfy everyone
- Inadequate continuity of old/new officers. Lack of checklist system
- Access to POLY leadership not easy
- Pockets of individuals
- ACS bureaucracy
- Limitations in our programming
- Location of national meetings as well as size and expense of meetings
- Inconsistency of program topics
- Meeting times not convenient
- Lack of relationship with polymer journals
- Website update of data

### **Opportunities Threats**

- Reaching out to related disciplines
- International Outreach
- Program emphasis on Product Development and targeting small businesses & entrepreneurs
- More women going into science
- Intersociety collaborations, i.e., MRS OSA
- Formation of a new division, or
- Merging w/ PMSE
- Better use of local sections and student chapters
- Leverage from ACS website and Macrogalleria
- Opportunities in terms of trend projections ...new technology
- More outreach like GA Tech
- More POLY speakers among ACS Tour Speakers
- Better publicity w/ ongoing speakers;
- Put polymer talks on website
- Better benefits we have over others
- Stay focused on fundamental science
- Boutique societies
- Globalization – USA might be a minor player in the future
- Declining membership along with increasing age
- Perception that polymer science is a mature field
- Perception that there are no jobs
- Limited time of volunteers
- Less emphasis on professional societies in the future
- Lack of company support/quantifiable value
- Complacency

## **IV. Case for Change**

POLY is a strong division with close to 8,000 members. POLY members are very talented and enable POLY to have many innovative offerings for our members like the POLY web page, POLY jobs listing, POLY list serve, programming at national meetings and workshops. POLY's membership has been flat and that is a concern. Below are some of the main reasons that POLY needs to change, including:

- Are we satisfying the needs of our members?
- Need to reach grass roots, local sections and individual members
- Maintain or grow membership
- Old value proposition is outdated especially to younger members
- Make Division more attractive to young members and students
- Need to be more accessible to the young generation
- Webcast, Electronic – ipod generation
- We have a valuable product. We don't want it to go to ruin.

- We should change to reflect the times
- “Polymer” out of fashion?
- Our society & division don’t reflect the changes in our profession
- The National ACS is a driver, changing the scope of divisions
- Create a better bridge to the boutique societies
- Need to differentiate from other organizations
- Public perception/improvement on public education
- Research funding more competitive now. Less \$ for fundamental work.
- Alternative to meetings... in-house meetings
- POLY should be a place for answers re: Polymers

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Although, there are some things that we could do to improve in the division, it is not broken. Rather, we are looking to be proactive. We intend to be thoughtful and deliberate with our changes to ensure that we keep our core as we reach out to new things.

### **V. Barriers**

There are many things that POLY is doing right. As research continues to become more interdisciplinary and global, we will continue to see changes at an unprecedented rate, and we will need to continue to be creative and innovative to maintain our lead. In addition, there is competition for our members, such as competing societies with a similar agenda. It is easy to become comfortable with how things are and to feel that we cannot change because there are too many barriers, including:

- A myopic view of the future – i.e. thinking only about POLY rather than the polymer constituency of the ACS.
- Fear of moving too far from our core strengths leading to a loss of membership
- Personalities may be different which causes us to have different goals making change to chaotic
- Inability to unite to create a better overall POLY?
- We need lots of ideas, and we do not have a clear process to select and execute the critical ideas
- Volunteers have time constraints and may need more financial support.
- Officers have pressure from current job
- Volunteer burnout is an issue
- Difficulty in finding more volunteers and leaders and the ability to match the volunteer’s skills and interests with a division need.
- No mechanism to enable more input from the scientific leaders in the division.
- Perhaps establish an Advisory Council of experts, or a National Academy of Polymer Scientists
- Gap in workshop leaders in different areas. More workshop organizers and more volunteers will be needed to keep up in new and emerging areas.
- Need to develop more contacts in new areas and for them to become more active in the division and in workshop planning.
- Open our ideas for meetings that incorporate companies and areas that are not strictly polymer-related.
- There are large industries, such as display and biotechnology that could dominate the needs of polymer technology in the future. How does POLY integrate these areas into programming and the division
- Natural limitations, such as our constraints under the ACS.
- e.g., bylaw change concerns, lack of independence
- Rigid structure and timing of National Meetings
- Preconceived notions and the planning mechanisms. There are even issues of the scientist “personality conflict,” i.e., the natural drive to try something new every day versus the need to stay focused on long term planning.

### **VI. Future State**

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Members are the life blood of the organization. POLY's focus is on retaining current members and successfully recruiting new and young members by providing tangible benefits to its members, including:

- Encompassing all aspects of polymer science (both synthetic and naturally occurring polymers).
- Being a key provider of scientific information in polymer science, e.g., Polymer "Google"
- Providing the best fundamental workshops and in-house tutorials
- Assuming a role at the forefront of new (state-of-the-art) technology
- Provide a view of the future, connecting to emerging opportunities and stimulating cutting edge technology
- Using information technology to communicate
- Conveying the breath of polymer technology that POLY includes may require a name change; this and other aspects will be reviewed within the ACS and POLY's membership.
- Expanding or POLY Jobs Database and jobs services
- Continuing go look for innovative ways to serve our members.

### VII. Division Strategy

POLY's strategy is encompassed in four broad strategic themes that will enable the division to serve its members and attract new members leading to increased growth and sustainability.

#### a. Strategic Themes

1. Be leaders in education, training, and outreach
2. Increase thematic diversity
3. Catalyze the integration of fundamental science with emerging technology
4. Be the foremost provider in professional development

POLY's strategic themes are brought to life by strategic initiatives. The strategic initiatives are tactical items that are used as a guide for the tactical, annual plan and have goals associated with them to enable measurement of our progress

#### b. Strategic Initiatives

##### 1. Be leaders in education, training and outreach

- Expand workshop programs w/ new and "young" leaders
- Goal – 2 new workshops per year for next 3 years
- Develop new short courses and ties w/ university educational programs in emerging fields
- Promote funding for underrepresented (minority or women) groups w/ scholarships
- Goal - Organize symposium at national meeting within next 3 years/support from government. (in process)

##### 2. Increase thematic diversity

- Define subdivisions in important, emerging areas, such as nanotechnology, biotechnology, alternative fuels, to name a few, and establish procedures for implementing change
- Organize minimum of three subdivisions within next 2 years
- Program at new interfaces w/ new divisions, and new (or unconventional) societies e.g., MRS.
- One unique joint program per year
- Rubber/POLY student colloquium scheduled for October 2006
- (POLY/PMSE/MRS is in process)
- Determine the "needs" and organize symposia accordingly
- Program Council review and document programming strategy and present at executive council and programming luncheon. Present in San Francisco – E. Amis and D. Kiserow

##### 3. Catalyze the integration of fundamental science with emerging technology

- Increase government agencies presence in POLY
- Email sent to government agencies to enlist interest. – D. Kiserow
- Form a global leadership forum for polymers (e.g., EU, Korea, China, Japan, India)

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- R. Advincula will talk with Japan
- B. Daly will talk with representatives regarding possibilities

### **4. Be the foremost provider of professional development**

- Recruit new members by reaching out to students, universities, and local sections
- Travel awards at each national meeting
- Utilize ACS Chem Ed. Group
- Target local sections for each national meeting – E. Martin establish contact
- eg., Georgia Tech students – trial
- Be a global resource in career development for polymer professionals
- Goal – 1 meeting per year at a university or local section where the POLY
- Division discusses opportunities for chemists and polymer scientists.
- Improved website and electronic access
- Potential outcomes: Increase of website traffic; elimination of Polymer Preprint CD; increase Jobs Database)