

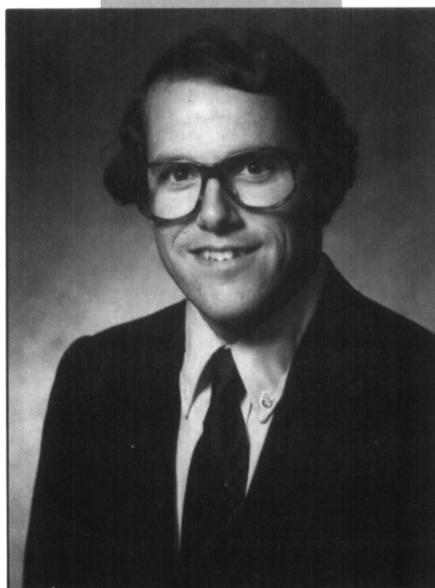
# Toward a National Agenda in Materials Science and Engineering

Publication of the comprehensive report, *Materials Science and Engineering for the 1990s: Maintaining Competitiveness in the Age of Materials*, has proved to be a watershed event in the materials science and engineering (MS&E) community. Completed in 1989, this report has fundamentally changed the way we look at MS&E. The consequences are far reaching: the recognition of MS&E as a coherent field, the emergence of unity in the MS&E community at the grassroots level, and the acceptance of materials as a national priority. The architects of this report and the report's subsequent national exposure have created a compelling case for a national agenda in MS&E.

Coherence and unity in MS&E have been the subject of much discussion in recent years. The MS&E report has articulated these issues and placed into motion a national dialogue among practitioners of the discipline which has in effect demonstrated this coherence and unity, producing for the first time a strong national voice for the materials community. Make no doubt about it: the political stock of the materials community has changed.

The MS&E study, chaired by Praveen Chaudhari and Merton Flemings, involved the work of hundreds of scientists and engineers. Following the report's publication, the study was discussed at numerous public forums (including the 1989 Fall Meeting of the Materials Research Society). These discussions produced a consensus that the study's key findings should be acted upon, and that regional meetings should be held in the MS&E community to involve working scientists and engineers in the process of further developing and implementing the recommendations.

Four regional meetings were held in 1990 involving more than 400 scientists and engineers from industry, academia, and government laboratories. Although each regional meeting was organized independently, it is highly significant that many common recommendations were forwarded. The individual meeting reports



*James B. Roberto*

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have now been assembled into a consensus document, *A National Agenda in Materials Science and Engineering: Implementing the MS&E Report*, which was presented to the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and the federal agencies on January 25, 1991. This report was published by MRS in February and presented to the scientific community at the Solid State Sciences Committee Forum on February 27.

In summary, the consensus report recommends a strategic, goal-oriented planning process for MS&E; increased industry, university, government laboratory cooperation; improvements in MS&E curricula and instructional equipment; and new initiatives in MS&E based on national planning and prioritization. The price tag: \$1.25 billion per year. I refer you to the article on the consensus report in this issue for the details.

The point of this message is not the specific recommendations of the report. Realistically speaking, these are a starting position for negotiations within the constraints of the political process. The message is that the MS&E community is finally at the table. The community that developed the transistor, superalloys, and high-temperature superconductivity is learning to speak with one voice.

I am proud of the strong role that MRS has played in promoting this development. The pioneering format of our technical meetings has done much to encourage coherence and unity in MS&E. I am also proud of the strong role that MRS has played in the unfolding of these historic events. From distinguished representation on the MS&E study to a significant role in the regional and national consensus meetings, MRS people have been very visible and effective in this process. As we move toward a national agenda in MS&E, I applaud those who have led the way and encourage each of you to contribute to this critical initiative for our field and the nation.

Jim Roberto

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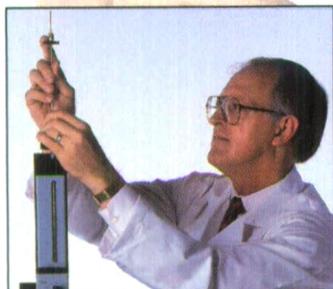
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<https://doi.org/10.1557/S0883769400057018> Published online by Cambridge University Press No. 9 on Reader Service Card.

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