

## It's about the Students

The recent Boston ACS National Meeting had something for everyone—technical lectures, sessions on [communicating chemistry](#) to the public, awards recognizing chemistry greatness, and networking opportunities aimed at advancing and reinventing careers. I had the privilege of participating in several such events, but one that stood out as especially memorable was the symposium organized by the chemistry graduate students of the University of Minnesota—the 2015 [Graduate Student Symposium Planning Committee \(GSSPC\)](#). Sponsored by the ACS Division of Chemical Education (CHED) with a different university chosen for each ACS National Meeting, the GSSPC comprising student groups that win a proposal-based competition by designing and presenting an innovative symposium topic, judged by a review panel that is composed of the previous year's GSSPC. The torch is thus passed from institution to institution. Not surprisingly, the list of past winning institutions represents many top-ranked chemistry graduate programs with students who have vision, ambition and passion for their field.

This is the second time I have been invited to present at a GSSPC symposium. When [Caltech students](#) put together a star-studded lineup for the San Diego ACS National Meeting in 2012, I was struck by the luminary speakers whom we faculty have a hard time recruiting to speak in our fancy departmental colloquia. I shared the stage with a Nobel Laureate, three now Priestley Medal winners and a fellow MacArthur Fellowship Awardee. [This year](#), with the theme of “Academic Innovations for Tomorrow's Industries”, UMN recruited several successful entrepreneurs, National Academy Members and a Nobel Laureate. The speakers were asked to talk about the process of translating academic science into commercial enterprises and products. We heard about new biomedical implant materials, fabrication methods that promise to beat Moore's law, drug-delivery strategies, novel 3D printing methods and solar-powered fuel cells. I was particularly interested to hear the various pathways by which success was achieved, as diverse, surprising, entertaining and wonderful as the science itself.

How did the students manage to collect this constellation of powerhouse scientists into one room on the same day?



The crowd watches the morning session talks intently and ACS Central Science Editorial Advisory Board member Joseph DeSimone (UNC Chapel Hill) discusses his transformative work on Carbon3D printing. Photo credits: Kailey Soller and Leon Lillie.

The same reason all student-driven events blow away the field: nothing is more motivating, even to the busiest and most callous scientist, than talented and driven students asking for their next source of inspiration. This is *the* reason many of us chose career paths focused on education and mentorship in the first place. These students impressed me even more than the A-list speakers they invited. Our future is bright indeed with this generation of chemists soon taking the helm.

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Keep your eyes on the schedule for the [March 2016 GSSPC](#) installment on molecular imaging, courtesy of the students of Purdue!

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#### Notes

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