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2018 MRS President

## Finding the right fit in your science journey

Last millennium, when I was a graduate student (and dinosaurs roamed the earth), I attended my first Materials Research Society (MRS) Meeting. The 1995 MRS Fall Meeting in Boston had not yet grown to encompass the Hynes Convention Center, rather it was spread across three hotels near the Prudential Center. My advisor, Professor Nicole Herbots, had taken me to my first big meeting.

I was in awe of the speakers. Names I had only read about were there in person and were willing to answer the million questions I peppered them with! Prof. Herbots kindly pointed me toward some of the most exciting breakthroughs of the day. I was a kid in a candy store. And then there were the nearly endless rows of posters to walk through. I learned so much at that meeting, I could not wait to go back.

I have attended many MRS meetings since then and have slowly evolved from student, to postdoc, to researcher, and now to administrator. (I may have devolved on that last transition.) However, the excitement of the MRS meetings remains; I still feel the thrill of walking into the poster sessions to hear the din of science, or get a rush sitting through a well-crafted lecture.

I have also taken another journey with MRS, one that I encourage all to try: getting involved with the Society. Just after I became a staff member at Sandia National Laboratories, my manager at the time, Charles Barbour, encouraged me to join an MRS committee and pointed me to the MRS Membership Engagement Committee. In this role, my input was valued, and the discussions were forward looking and rich. And that was it; I was forever hooked on volunteering. Since then, the pathways for engaging in MRS have grown in number and diversity. Below are a few of the ways that members can engage with MRS to gain new value from being a part of the organization and advancing their careers.

**Student/Early-Career Professional Engagement:** MRS offers many opportunities for student and early-career engagement, from University Chapter activities to planning

symposia and broader impact activities, to blogging and writing. Student summits are some of my favorite new activities. These are typically two-day events that bring together students and industrial leaders and include talks, poster sessions, a reception, and discussion panels. At the 2018 MRS Spring Meeting, the summit focused on wearable technology.

**Professional Development and Career Services:** Yes, the Career Fair is a cornerstone of MRS' professional development program. However, the program extends much further than that to include science communication workshops, webinars, sessions on interviewing and resume writing, networking, career paths, retraining sessions for current ABET evaluators, Essentials of Getting Your Work Published, and Obtaining Green Cards for Scientific Researchers.

**Competitions:** A decade ago, researchers from my institution entered several images in the MRS Science as Art competition when it began. We did not win, but the resulting art still hangs in the hallways and is a constant reminder of the beauty of science. Today, you can enter this competition and many more, including Science in Video (SciVid), the University Chapters t-shirt competition, special poster competitions, and iMatSci, where innovators compete for cash prizes and possibly start-up funding.

As I have said in my other letters,<sup>1-3</sup> MRS is our organization! There are many ways to engage with the Society to propel it into the 22nd century. I encourage you to try some of these activities and see what the right fit is for you in your science journey.

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### References

1. S.J. Hearne, *MRS Bull.* **43** (1), 5 (2018).
2. S.J. Hearne, *MRS Bull.* **43** (7), 469 (2018).
3. A shameful attempt at self-citation! I do not condone or advocate for such horrific behavior.