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MUACC—Our Secret Weapon

Communication is one of the most effective methods of ensuring the survival and growth of ideas and advancing the collegiality of professions. Analytical chemistry is indeed a much stronger discipline today because of a network of regional associations of academic analytical chemists. Having participated in the most recent MUACC (Midwestern Universities Analytical Chemistry Conference) meeting held last October at the University of Wisconsin, I can testify to the strength and vigor of analytical chemistry in at least one part of our country.

Thanks to the creative efforts of the late Professor Hobard H. Willard, MUACC began in 1947 as a small informal meeting of academic analytical chemists, most of whom were former research students or second-generation students of Professor Willard. The purpose of that first meeting held at Northwestern University was to discuss research in progress in the laboratories of the attendees, to share ideas, discoveries, and insights, as well as to seek suggestions and advice. Since that time MUACC has grown to become one of the finer traditions of our profession. Although nominally confined to the Midwest, MUACC now includes academic analytical chemists from all over the U.S. and Canada. Its greatest representation, however, is still from midwestern universities.

For the most part, MUACC remains true to its traditions, in spite of its size and the diversity of its attendees. The talks are informal, deal with research in progress, and generate considerable discussion, particularly during frequent breaks and refreshment periods. The only requirement for participation is a commitment to academic research in analytical chemistry. I was particularly impressed by the strong participation of young academics from many smaller institutions.

The original concept was so successful that similar regional groups have been established around the country, mainly through the efforts of professors who earlier in their careers were fortunate enough to have participated in MUACC. Thus, in 1967 SWAP (Southwestern Analytical Professors) was started by Professors Michael Burke and Henry Freiser at the University of Arizona. This was followed by the formation of SEACC (Southeastern Analytical Chemistry Conference) in 1970 by Professors David Hercules and Donald Leyden, then at the University of Georgia, and NEAACC (New England Academic Analytical Chemistry Conference) in 1978 by Professor David Curran at the University of Massachusetts. Annual meetings are rotated among various colleges and universities in the respective geographic regions.

These associations are one of the most effective means for maintaining the vigor of our growing discipline, and even greater participation should be encouraged.

