

FACS in the 21st century

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FACS IS IDEALLY positioned to be a powerful, inclusive, outward-facing federation of chemical and allied societies in the Asia Pacific region. The Federation promotes networking and collaboration within the region, and strong engagement in the broader international chemical community. Over the past three years, FACS has been refocused to capture these opportunities by the restructuring of three critical aspects of the FACS operations.

Inclusiveness and international engagement

Most current FACS member societies are active, but some would benefit from more substantial engagement. Several other nations in the region are not members yet, either because they have lacked a formal chemical society or because they have not been encouraged strongly enough to join the FACS. The Chemical Society of Timor Leste is the newest member. The Asia/Pacific region is now an economic and scientific powerhouse, equalling the North America and Europe's traditional centers. FACS has engaged major chemistry societies through visits, and the ACS hosted our Executive Committee (EXCO) meeting for the first time. We signed memoranda of understanding with the ACS and the RSC, and we share congress resources. The involvement of FACS member societies as Official Participating Organizations in Pacifichem is another outreach channel. Clearly, chemistry is an international discipline.

Additionally, FACS has a reciprocal relationship and substantial collaboration with the Federation of European Chemical Societies (FECS, now the European Chemical Society), facilitating communications between our 32 and their 51 member societies. Chemists in each Federation will participate in major conferences and meetings hosted by the other, and joint symposia will be organized. Of course, the COVID-19 pandemic has required novel technological solutions to the way conferences are held and how the EXCO and member societies communicate.

Refocusing the projects

The initial purpose of the FACS projects was to run small regional meetings on chemistry topics, foster regional networking and collaboration, and help organize the scientific programs for Asian Chemical Congresses. This need has dwindled, so the projects have become less active and are seriously underfunded. The new Special Interest Groups, overseen by the two Science Directors, now compete for much larger tranches of seed funding and are more dynamic, starting up, growing, and closing down in response to the rapid developments in chemistry. A new platform for students and young chemists to distinguish themselves at the early stage of their professional training is being developed. This was rolled out at the last

Asiachem Congresses in Taipei and showcased young chemists' outstanding achievements across the Asia-Pacific region. The "Best of the Best Prizes" ChemCompetition for students of various levels, and the Asian Rising Stars Program for junior professionals with a Ph.D. degree were highly successful events. The EXCO also developed a symposium program in which member society Presidents and other leaders in chemical science presented key developments in chemistry in their respective regions. These successful initiatives will be developed further for future Congresses.

Realigning the financial structure

The current financial structure has served the FACS well in the past but needs to be realigned to capture new opportunities in the 21st century. FACS reserves are modest and provide inadequate buffer for any serious financial losses and to run the projects effectively. Given the high profile of chemistry in the Asia-Pacific region, FACS should grow resources to allow much more to be achieved. This will be done by increasing the profile and visibility of FACS via a new Communications Director role, attracting more sponsorship and donations by growing the size and visibility of the Asian Chemical Congress (now renamed Asiachem to compete with the two other major regional chemistry congresses, Pacifichem and ABCChem), and by aligning the FACS membership fees to an objective measure of country development (allowing of course for individual society circumstances). Membership fees are now indexed for inflation, and future host societies for the Asiachem Congresses will collect a small contribution from registration fees that will be used to fund the above important initiatives of FACS.

Check the FACS LinkedIn and Facebook pages, and look out for the new FACS web site.

Prof. Reuben Jih-Ru Hwu
President, FACS
National Tsing Hua University, Taiwan

Prof. Dave Winkler
Immediate past President, FACS,
Monash, La Trobe, and Nottingham Universities and
CSIRO Data61

