

## Letter from the President

### A Rush to Achievement

August used to be the “slow month” of the summer, especially for U.S. students. With camps and other summer programs held largely in July and school classes starting in September, student activity ground to a near halt in August. However, now with the earlier, pre-Labor Day starts of many schools and colleges, August is when the “back-to-school” season is in full swing.

On many campuses, a major flurry of activity is associated with Fraternity/Sorority Rush. Buildings are painted, carpets are cleaned, kitchens are restocked, and most importantly, new members are recruited. Fraternities and sororities are one way that the overwhelming, professor-centered university environment is brought down to a manageable, student-focused unit that can be dedicated to a set of compatible social and societal goals.

The Materials Research Society has “fraternities/sororities” as well. We call them University Chapters, or more informally, student chapters. We have over 30 active chapters, and new ones are chartered during most major MRS meetings. Chapters are created on university campuses to foster discussion among students and faculty across a broad range of materials disciplines, generate student interest in materials research, and promote the exchange and dissemination of information between students and the Society.



*“We salute our MRS University Chapters.”*

*Howard E. Katz*

Some are located at powerhouse universities granting PhD degrees, while others are based at four-year colleges with strong undergraduate research programs.

In the spirit of rush, it is appropriate to point out a few of the outstanding accomplishments reported by some of our uni-

versity chapters. For example, the University of Central Florida has been holding an annual “Materials Day” on campus every year that includes the induction of 10–15 new members and reaches an audience of over 100 others. This chapter is strongly coupled to a growing materials research effort at UCF. At Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, the student chapter organized a campuswide forum on sustainability in engineering, featuring a talk by David Taggart, former CEO of Hypercar, an alternative vehicle company. The forum drew about 300 attendees.

As reported in the May 2004 issue of *MRS Bulletin*, the University of Florida actively matches undergraduate students interested in research opportunities with graduate students and industrial firms. Among the many other activities promoted by this vigorous chapter are annual social events, engineering fairs, tours of local high-tech enterprises, and grad-school and career-oriented networking. Members are encouraged to attend MRS Meetings, and are supported with funds generated by chapter endeavors.

Last year, Stanford University initiated a “Careers in Materials” lecture series, featuring prominent speakers from Silicon Valley industries. So far, lecturers from both established and startup companies have appeared, providing career stimulation and networking opportunities. Binghamton University recently presented two poster displays. The purpose of one was to highlight new research and degree program options in materials engineering. The other one served to build bridges to a growing chemistry department and to the university technology marketing organization. The sponsoring chapters at both universities have posted detailed descriptions of their activities on the MRS University Chapter Web Site, which can serve as blueprints for similar projects elsewhere: [www.mrs.org/university/](http://www.mrs.org/university/).

We salute our MRS University Chapters as a source of future MRS membership and leadership, and wish all their members a fruitful recruiting “rush” and a fulfilling year to come.

HOWARD E. KATZ  
2004 MRS PRESIDENT

#### To Learn More about University Chapters

[www.mrs.org/university](http://www.mrs.org/university)

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