



AIChE Leadership Development Conference Inspiring Tomorrow's Volunteer Leaders

Vision, determination, passion — these are the traits successful leaders share. At the Leadership Development Conference (LDC) hosted by the Boston local section (June 8–10; Boston, MA), today's AIChE volunteer leaders, along with tomorrow's, shared best practices, as well as participated in interactive workshops that helped to refine their leadership skills.

Expanding on the success of last year's LDC hosted by the South Texas local section, the Boston local section achieved its goal of over 100 attendees. While the days were long, starting from as early as 7:30 am and ending at nearly 10 pm, the attendees expressed satisfaction at what they learned and the quality of people they networked with.

The first full day of the meeting focused on honing leadership skills. Rob Reintjes, the 2004 chair of the Boston local section, kicked off the meeting with his thought-provoking discussion on visions and teams. "Great leaders align the people around them — employees, suppliers, and customers — towards their vision," said Reintjes. "If you want people to get on board your 'vision train,' they need to know where the vision is going and they must want to go there."

Following the leadership theme, attendees were educated on how to give effective presentations — where the audience remembers the message, and the presenter. Tom Kennedy, principal of the Kennedy Group (www.kennedy-groupboston.com) shared words of wisdom, drawing from his many years of experience training executives. One of the take-away messages — less can be more. Powerpoint, while a critical tool, is generally misused. "Rather than using it as a visual aid, people often write down their entire presentations on Powerpoint slides and read directly from them," said Kennedy. "The most



Larry Evans (left), AIChE president, presents James Cross, Boston local section chair, with a plaque of appreciation for hosting the 2007 LDC. Also instrumental in the success of the LDC are (starting from third person on left): Andy Irwin, past chair; Kannan Vembu, vice chair; Mike Blaney, marketing chair; Connie Blair, program chair; David Campanella, membership chair; Rob Reintjes, past chair; Yizu Zhu, section member; and Simon Spitalny, AIChE volunteer membership activities professional.

engaging speakers, such as Lou Gerstner, don't use Powerpoint," he continued. In perfecting a presentation, Kennedy noted that "it's all in the preparation" — know your audience and use relevant stories to engage them.

As all leaders know, there is no escaping office politics. Chris Holland, founder and president of The Holland Group (www.thehollandgroup.us), discussed navigating the minefield of office politics using tales from his own experiences involving his mentors. Rounding out the leadership training, Jeff Davis, principal leadership development consultant for the MITRE Corp. (www.mitre.org), challenged attendees to clarify how they can make a difference, while Janet Britcher, president of Transformation Management (www.transformationmanagement.com) focused on delegation skills.

Over dinner, attendees applied these new skills in stimulated discussions about how the AIChE can take a leadership role in solving world problems, including: energy technologies; green chemistry and sustainability; water resources; climate change; new and alternative fuels; and biotechnology.

During the second day, the attendees

dispersed into groups and shared best practices on a range of topics, such as programming, marketing and outreach, and volunteer engagement and recruitment. For example, the South Texas and Southeast Texas local sections discussed strategies on how to get members to attend meetings. Interestingly, evening events held in the Southeast Texas local section were not necessarily technical in nature. Many were social gatherings, such as a crawfish boil, where members networked informally.

Many attendees mentioned that it was hard not to be motivated by the organizers and presenters. "The Boston section put on a great conference — I improved my leadership skills, connected with many AIChE leaders and participated in discussions about helping to solve world energy and environmental problems," said Scott Bobek, senior vice president at Morgan Stanley.

"Hopefully, those who came will be inspired to volunteer as hosts and continue the revitalization of the LDC," said Felicia Guglielmi, director of AIChE Volunteer and Membership Activities. For more information on hosting future LDCs, contact Simon Spitalny at simos@aiche.org.