May 1998

Department of Chemical Engineering Graduates
Michigan State University

Dear Friends of the Department,

What a beautiful time of year at MSU! The sun is shining, the grass is green and the trees are now in full leaf. In the past few weeks we have gone through finals and graduation and have sent another crop of capable young chemical engineers out into the work force. I am proud of our students. You can be proud of them too.

I would like to bring you up to date on some things that are happening at your department. At the top of the list is that we are planning the first annual reunion dinner for graduates of the department during the evening of Thursday, October 15, 1998, here on campus. This is an excellent opportunity to visit the campus, see old friends, tour the department’s new facilities, meet the faculty and network with other graduates of the department.

If this reunion dinner is as successful as we expect it to be, we will hold other such dinners, both here in East Lansing and perhaps at other locations where we have significant concentrations of former students. We hope many of you will be able to come. The dinner is on us… all you have to do is get here. If you would like to attend, please return the enclosed card so that we can plan this and future get togethers. More information on this dinner will be forthcoming for those who wish to attend.

You will be pleased to know that another one of our students, mentored by Dr. Marty Hawley, has placed in the annual Student Design Competition sponsored by the American Institute of Chemical Engineers. In January we were informed that Mr. Brian Nowak, a graduating senior, won third place in the latest national competition. In the thirty one years that MSU has participated in this competition, we have finished first nine times, second twice, third nine times and have also received six Honorable Mentions. In other words, out of 124 possible prizes in all the years of the competition, chemical engineers from MSU have garnered 26 of the prizes, or 21% of all prizes, in competition with students from approximately 150 departments nationwide. No other school even comes close to this record. (The little blue school in Ann Arbor has exactly one top finish in all these years.) Go Marty Hawley, Go State!

This is another very good year for student employment. Many of our students are receiving multiple job offers. The job hunting success of Roger Chen, one of our excellent seniors, was recently featured on the front page of the Lansing State Journal (see enclosed article). A number of our students are going to work in the food industry and are highly sought after there. Students with work experience, such as through the co-op program, are in especially high demand.

Although about a third of our students already participate in co-op work or internships, I would
like to see even more of them have this valuable experience. In five years, I hope that at least half of our students will graduate with co-op or other work experience. I strongly believe co-op is good for the students and for the companies that employ them. If you are in a position to recommend that your organization hire some co-op students or interns from State, I would be grateful if you would let me know who to contact. I will do my part by strongly encouraging all students to participate in co-op or internships. I have found that students who have work experience get much more out of their classes.

Finally, some faculty news: Professor Kris Berglund was recently named a Distinguished Faculty member at Michigan State University. Only about 2% of all faculty members achieve this recognition. Although we share Kris with the departments of chemistry and agricultural engineering, he is in fact a chemical engineer and we claim him as our very own (especially when he “does good”). Kris has been extremely active in developing methods to convert plant materials to more valuable finished goods and is highly regarded both nationally and internationally. One of Kris’ most recent research projects involves developing true fruit brandies from Michigan fruit crops (see enclosed article). Michigan regularly produces excess tart cherries and Kris’ work may greatly benefit Michigan cherry farmers.

Thank you for your friendly response to my first letter. I heard back from many of you that you would like my letters to continue. You also asked that we send out the larger departmental newsletter on a yearly basis. I want you to know that your response to my first letter has already made a difference in our program. Starting in early 1999 we expect to add experiments to the unit operations laboratory on solids handling that were suggested by some of you in response to my last letter. Many of our graduates have told us that students need additional familiarity with solids processing or powder technology. As we proceed with renewing the curriculum, we will also look for opportunities to add more solids processing content to the lecture courses.

Once again, we hope to see you at our first alumni dinner on October 15. If you cannot come to this event, please return the enclosed card anyway. We would like to hear from you and perhaps we can eventually plan a dinner closer to where you live. As always, please feel free to drop in and see me whenever you are in town.

Sincerely yours,

Bruce E. Dale
Professor and Chair

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