

# A Visit from the President: “A Highlight of the Academic Semester”

Maureen Byko

As a professor at the Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Diran Apelian relishes reaching out to the future materials scientists and engineers of the world, spreading the word of materials science as a solution to such global problems as poverty and hunger. Perhaps, then, it is not surprising that when Apelian served as president of TMS in 2008–2009, he opted to do the same, visiting three groups of university students in far-flung locations, sharing his enthusiasm for materials science as a profession and as a way to make a difference in the world.

Apelian, who completed his term as TMS president in February 2009, visited with students at the University of

Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada; the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa; and the University of Puerto Rico–Mayaguez. He met with the students in late 2008 and early 2009, sharing his views about materials engineering as well as the benefits of professional society membership.

Each experience, Apelian said, reinforced his belief that up-and-coming scientists and engineers are keenly interested in applying their talents to improving their world, and that the TMS “Materials and Society” initiative encompasses that spirit well. The visits benefited everyone involved, he said.

“Visiting the students at Alabama, Alberta, and at the University of Puerto

Rico in Mayaguez, has energized me more than I could have imagined,” Apelian said. “Witnessing the enthusiasm of the next generation of students, their genuine interest in contributing to the world, and their commitment to the field is truly impressive.”

Apelian paid the visits as part of his duties as TMS president. At times he spoke just to students and other times, he addressed university professionals, as well. While in Alberta, Apelian was invited to lecture, as part of the university’s D.B. Robinson Distinguished Speaker Series, about Materials and Society. The lecture hall was full, reinforcing Apelian’s conviction that the theme resonates with students and professionals alike.

At the University of Puerto Rico, Apelian was met with equally enthusiastic students, who have become a strong—and award-winning—presence at TMS meetings. Those students heard Apelian’s assurances that engineering, particularly materials science and engineering, is a career choice that will provide returns that last a lifetime. “I told them about all the wonderful opportunities that exist, about all the societal challenges that are begging for technological solutions,” he said.

The message had the desired effect on Apelian’s audience, according to O. Marcelo Suarez, the Material Advantage faculty mentor at the university.

“Dr. Apelian’s visit was certainly the highlight of the academic semester,” he said. “Through the TMS president’s visit the students became much more aware that they are part of something consequential, not only for their own career paths but for society.”

Maureen Byko is editor of *JOM*.

A lighter moment at the University of Alberta. Far left is Hani Henein, faculty advisor and TMS programming director. Apelian is third from left.



The University of Puerto Rico–Mayaguez students with Apelian, front row, right.