

**Positions Available**

**ASSISTANT PROFESSOR**

**Ceramic Science and Engineering  
The Pennsylvania State University**

The Materials Research Laboratory and The Materials Science and Engineering Department at Penn State invite applications for a joint, tenure-track, Assistant Professor position effective in the 1990-91 academic year.

Candidates demonstrating expertise in the processing of ceramics, with an emphasis on materials chemistry, are encouraged to apply. The successful candidate is expected to organize an independent research program and to develop and teach courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

A PhD in ceramics, materials science or related fields with proven research and development experience is a requirement. Senior level appointments will be considered for candidates with exceptional records.

Curriculum vitae and references should be submitted by **August 15, 1990** to:

Prof. David J. Green, Ceramic Science  
Dept. of Materials Science and Engineering

The Pennsylvania State University  
231 Steidle Bldg.  
University Park, PA 16802

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**In the next issue...a special focus on  
materials education...**

Guest Editor Reza Abbaschian, chairman and professor, Department of Materials Science and Engineering, University of Florida, has compiled a series of 10 articles that discuss issues, ideas, and actions.

**POSTERMINARIES**

**Rooting Around in the C Pile**

If you have subjected yourself to a time-management course, you know about the *A*, *B*, and *C* piles. Time-critical action items move through the *A* pile lickety-split. Longer term, time-sensitive matters work their way through the *B* pile in due course. And languishing in the *C* pile are all those things that no one will notice aren't done. We have *C* piles at home, at the office, in our electronic note pads and on the back burners of our brains.

Many items deserve to be ignored in the *C* pile. Those of us who have trouble moving anything directly from the in-basket to wastebasket have an overabundance of such items. At times we are moved to rearrange or even flip through our *C* piles. This usually occurs when its height becomes unsightly or perilous, when something is lost and we've searched everywhere else, or when we are overcome by *C*-pile guilt. The last is indeed a rare occurrence for most of us. For whatever reason we delve into our lowest priority stacks, we often find items—the ones that deserved to rest there—which are now outdated, are more obviously irrelevant, or fail to spark any recollection of why they were saved in the first place. Out they go with no opportunities lost and, with some luck, that side chair that had been in your office for visitors will fit back in again.

Now let's look at the positive side for us who habitually *C*-pile higher and deeper. We saved some of that stuff because, at the time, we felt there might be something worth considering in it at our leisure. In fact, many *C* piles include our own little notes scribbled to ourselves to preserve flashes of genius which occur at inconvenient times and places—on the airplane, while daydreaming at a meeting, in the shower. Commonly, these are office ideas spawned at home or the reverse. These

gems sink in the *C* pile waiting to be rediscovered.

Have you ever thought of something clever to do only to find that months later someone else had done it while your brainchild was trapped in the *C* pile? Has something ever not gone as well as it might have if you had pursued that not-so-urgent idea or read that not-so-central report earlier? These experiences attest to the inherent value of our *C* piles, true treasure troves of the most creative products of our busy minds and of our ability to identify things of potential value in our mail.

What do you suppose would happen to a gross national product, a trade deficit, a research program, or a curriculum if the sparks of ingenuity were not smothered in the low priority bin? Some time ago, Rustom Roy (Penn State), a founder and former president of MRS, recommended that scientists would benefit from a form of tithing which would release 10% of their time for just thinking. In a later editorial,<sup>1</sup> he upped the percentage to 20, suggesting that funds be used to

"purchase 20% (one day/week) of the time of 5,000 of all the senior-most materials researchers in the country, and allocate it to doing absolutely nothing—just thinking about the problem, asking the deeper questions, questioning the usual approaches....maybe even dreaming a little."

If ever this wonderful algorithm should be widely applied, *C* piles beware! For all those nuggets of forgotten wisdom will be rooted out and the remnants will fade into dust-collecting ignominy, where all truly useless memos, reports, and cancelled checks belong.

1. R. Roy, *MRS BULLETIN*, 10 (2) March/April 1985, p. 18-19.