

Those who contribute to re-envisioning our research, communications, and meeting efforts also nurture and strengthen our institutions and community.



With resilience comes positive growth

Matt Copel
2020 MRS President

I hope this letter finds you, your families, and your colleagues to be safe and well. As the world reacts to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, one thing is certain: adjustments have been necessary. Whether this involves personal changes, such as what times are safe to visit the local grocery store, or professional, and you are now taking remote classes or are working offsite, most of us have made some type of adjustment. Some of our adjustments have been accompanied by great stress, overwhelming us with competing demands, like caring for a family while working from home. Others may be coping with illness in their families, or are ill themselves. We face disappointments of canceled vacations, research projects, and professional travel. For us as researchers, attending scientific conferences are valued opportunities to meet with our friends and colleagues, share research of which we are so proud, and network with our diverse and global community of materials scientists. For early-stage researchers, these in-person meeting and presentation opportunities are even more important, as they have direct impact on their careers and advancement. We may now have to be more creative in these endeavors and I'm eager to see what new prospects emerge.

The Materials Research Society (MRS) is making adjustments as well. Earlier this year, MRS leadership took an action unprecedented in the history of the Society, canceling the 2020 MRS Spring Meeting in Phoenix, Ariz. That decision was not made lightly, and I would like to once again thank the Spring Meeting Chairs, Symposium Organizers, volunteers, and Headquarters staff for their two-year commitment of time and talent to plan a robust conference with new and high-quality content. I would also be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the investment our presenters devoted in preparation for the Spring Meeting. But, ultimately, the health and well-being of our members, attendees, staff, and the materials community were of most importance and guided our decision to cancel.

The good news is that we are a strong Society and materials community, and more importantly, we are resilient. MRS staff has been working diligently with both Spring and Fall Meeting Chairs and Symposium Organizers, and recently announced a **one-time-only joint 2020 MRS Spring and Fall Meeting** that will take place in Boston. This will be a really different event for MRS. In fact, it will start a day earlier than usual (Saturday, November 28 through Friday, December 4) because there is so much stuff to pack into that timeframe! Our goal is to include as many of the Spring Meeting oral and poster presentations in this joint meeting as possible. That includes those who may have withdrawn their abstracts from the Spring Meeting based on safety concerns or travel restrictions. Presenters will be hearing shortly about rescheduling options.

In addition to the symposium sessions, we will also be working to reschedule as many Spring Meeting-related events as possible. Some of these will now take place throughout



this summer and fall in the form of a virtual experience, as webinars, or other types of special events. Because recent MRS OnDemand® Webinar attendance has been strong, we expect that losing the excitement of an in-person presentation will be more than compensated for by having a broader, focused audience and increased attendance.

MRS has also gained valuable experience during these summer months as the Conference Services team managed three events—the Electronic Materials Conference (EMC), the Device Research Conference (DRC), and the American Conference on Neutron Scattering (ACNS)—that transitioned to a fully virtual format. Each used different platforms and virtual partners, but all provided important best practices as we navigate future virtual ventures.

Of course, there are still a lot of legitimate concerns about COVID-19 and what impact it may have by late fall. Be assured that MRS is weighing all options and considering several contingency plans. While we are planning for, and anticipating a successful joint meeting in Boston, should the need arise, MRS will be prepared for a smaller in-person meeting, along with limited virtual programming and events. MRS leadership continues to monitor conditions and will announce any adjustments as we grow closer to the meeting dates.

As the world starts to reopen and restrictions are loosened, all of us will continue to face challenges, both personal and professional. Yet despite these obstacles, I feel heartened seeing our families, friends, and colleagues rising to the occasion with renewed commitment to their professions, to science, to their communities, and to their peers.

And that brings me back to resilience. I was recently asked how we will move forward. In my opinion, those who contribute to re-envisioning our research, communications, and meeting efforts also nurture and strengthen our institutions and community. We are a strong and resilient materials community, and that will allow us to grow and change and move forward toward “the positive,” even in the most difficult times.

Be safe and stay healthy.

Matt Copel

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