

Robert Post Outlines Current Materials Focus at OSTP

An unprecedented opportunity exists today in OSTP to focus on materials, according to Robert Post, assistant to the President's science adviser, from the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). Speaking March 15 at the quarterly trustees' luncheon of the Federation of Materials Societies (FMS), Post described the materials aspects of OSTP's current activities. OSTP is looking at materials issues in three ways, through COMAT, PCAST, and the NCMC, he said. Based in OSTP, COMAT (Committee on Materials) represents an interagency coordination function for materials. PCAST (President's Council of Advisers for Science and Technology), chaired by Presidential science adviser Allan Bromley, is currently framing issues for the President, one of them being materials. The NCMC (National Critical Materials Council) is due for rejuvenation, and Bromley now chairs that body.

"With COMAT functioning with respect to agency interests, with PCAST having direct access to the President, and with the Critical Materials Council garnering input from the industrial sector for the recommendation of policy, a great deal of materials-relevant activity is and will be ongoing at OSTP," said Post.

COMAT is preparing a "research and development crosscut" to assess materials-related activities from all parts of the federal government, and Post anticipated the inclusion of state-funded and, to some extent, private-funded R&D in the assessment. Lyle Schwartz of NIST leads this effort.

"OSTP views materials as a key enabling technology, critical in many systems," said Post, also noting that "a relatively small fraction of the R&D in materials is funded by the federal government." The majority of support and activity comes from industry and resides in industry, primarily in medium- and small-sized companies. These companies, said Post, have not had a coherent voice in formulating materials policies.

In identifying goals for the nation, Post included the continuation of long-term R&D support for development of the knowledge base and increased attention to commercialization of R&D results with emphasis on the synthesis and processing aspects highlighted in the recent National Academies' survey.

Concerning the Academies' MS&E Study, said Post, it was Bromley who encouraged the Academies to hold regional meetings around the country to assess the

appropriate means for implementing recommendations to the Study and to determine appropriate roles for government, industry and university sectors. The regional meetings are expected to define issues which will be correlated at the national level and presented as a distillation of materials science and engineering needs.

In closing, Post noted that the key to success for the efforts now being initiated will be the development of a continuing process of evaluation which will involve, among other things, updating the reference documents presently being prepared. For example, the COMAT survey, which crosscuts all government agencies, will be updated annually, and annual updates will be appended to the recently released

OSTP National Action Plan for Superconductivity. Because of the good industrial relationship and good relationship with OSTP, Post voiced his anticipation of FMS's continued involvement in the overall process.

Post identified the Superconductivity Pilot Centers created by the U.S. Department of Energy at three national laboratories as a premier example of innovative technology transfer for the benefit of the country in the materials area. He indicated that this model may well be followed in other technologies. □

Editor's Note: FMS is an association which represents a segment of the materials community. Twelve materials-related societies are represented on the FMS Board.



FMS President Greg Cullen (left) and Robert Post address audience at March 15 FMS meeting.



WASHINGTON MATERIALS FORUM

Superconductors and Semiconductors

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This conference is being held in conjunction with the Spring Forum of the Solid State Sciences Committee (SSSC) of the National Research Council, which will be held in Washington, DC, February 27, to consider "The Effectiveness of Consortia in Industrial Competitiveness." The SSSC, often in conjunction with the National Materials Advisory Board (NMAB), holds this Forum to inform the technical community of current science policy and funding issues and give attendees the opportunity to discuss funding issues with representatives from government funding agencies and staffers from House and Senate Committees. In previous years, the Forum has included a brief technical session in a selected area of high current interest. In 1991, the technical meeting described here will replace this session. It will enable its participants to discuss their latest technical results with their peers as well as allow them access to the Washington Community. Co-sponsorship of this meeting by several technical societies is expected to reduce proliferation of meetings in Washington while providing all associated societies access to the Washington Community.

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This symposium will focus on the preparation and properties of thin film high temperature superconducting oxides with emphasis on the materials properties and problems important for electronic applications. Papers are solicited in the following areas:

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