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The Center of Excellence in Analytical Chemistry at ETH-Zürich

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Abstract. The main goal of the Center of Excellence in Analytical Chemistry (CEAC) is to promote research collaborations and to coordinate teaching activities between different institutions of the analytical community in the Zürich area and beyond.

Modern analytical chemistry encompasses a wide range of techniques for addressing real world problems. This great diversity is reflected in the fact that numerous institutes at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zürich (ETHZ), other research institutions, and companies in the Zürich area are actively involved in analytical chemistry research. The main goal of the Center of Excellence in Analytical Chemistry (CEAC) is to promote research collaborations and to coordinate teaching activities between these institutions, thus strengthening the status of analytical chemistry as a whole.

The idea to create a Center of Excellence in Analytical Chemistry was put forth in 1995 by the president of the ETH-Zürich, Prof. J. Nüesch. Its establishment was approved on June 13, 1995, by the executive board (Schulleitung) of the ETHZ. It was subsequently implemented by a group of scientists from ETHZ, the Swiss Federal Institute for Environmental Science and Technology (EAWAG), the Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Testing and Research (EMPA), and the Paul Scherrer Institute (PSI). The CEAC was formally started with a meeting on June 20, 1995, at the EAWAG in Dübendorf, attracting over 80 participants.

A critical question that arose in the early stages of the project was whether the center would be responding to an actual need or whether it would just create unnecessary structures and artificial ties between institutes and groups that could easily collaborate without such a center. Today, over two years after the start of the CEAC, we are convinced that the center has led to a closer collaboration of groups involved in analytical chemistry, resulting in a true synergy between them. Easy access to a wide range of information about analytical research, education, instrumentation, expertise, and jobs has also been provided by the CEAC. Thus, it can be concluded that the CEAC has assumed an important role in the analytical community in the Zürich area and beyond.

Among the many activities of the CEAC, we highlight just a few here:

- Joint research projects, for example in the form of doctoral theses supervised by members of several associated institutions, are carried out.
- The Special Analytical Chemistry Colloquium is organized jointly by members of the CEAC and takes place about four times per semester. For this colloquium, analytical chemists of high international reputation are invited as speakers.
- The *Wilhelm Simon* Scholarship Program in Analytical and Environmental Chemistry has been made possible by the International Center for Scientific Culture – World Laboratory in Lausanne. It provides research opportunities for young scientists from developing countries and from Eastern Europe/Newly Emerging States at laboratories associated with the CEAC. This

program is a unique opportunity for the fellows to establish international connections with the main goal of transferring state-of-the-art analytical technology and skills to areas of the world with lack of funding for analytical chemistry research.

- CEAC summer workshops were held since the establishment of the CEAC. The topics covered so far were 'Theory of Sampling' (1995); 'Quality Assurance in Analytical Research & Development' (1996); and 'Trends in Inorganic Instrumental Analysis' (1997). These summer workshops are becoming increasingly popular, also in the industry. The topics planned for the coming years are 'Combinatorial Chemistry – a Challenge for Chemical Analysis' and 'Measurement Uncertainty & Reference Standards'.
- The center further serves as a central resource to disseminate information about research and teaching activities in the field of analytical chemistry, e.g., by maintaining a large address database. Presently, another database on the availability of analytical instrumentation and expertise is under construction. The latter will be made available through the World Wide Web when completed in late 1997.

The CEAC is striving to continuously improve the quality of its services, to enlarge its databases, to organize attractive seminars, to cover all important areas of modern analytical chemistry in workshops, and to keep in mind the needs of industry in the analytical chemistry curriculum of the ETHZ. Activities and events organized by the Center of Excellence are, of course, open to all interested colleagues. Information about our activities is available in the annual report (available from the CEAC secretariat) and can also be accessed *via* the World Wide Web. The following WWW address will provide you with a general overview as well as information about current activities, lectures, etc. organized by the CEAC-ETHZ. In addition job offers can be posted and consulted.

New WWW address:
<http://www.ceac.ethz.ch/>

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