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Conference

A Nobel Gathering

Laureates of most prestigious chemistry prize interact with students, discuss chemical solutions to energy crisis

[Sarah Everts](#)



Sarah Everts/C&EN

TALKING SHOP Richard Ernst, the 1991 Nobel Prize in Chemistry winner, chats with student delegates.

About 580 chemistry graduate students and postdocs from 67 countries are [mingling this week](#) with 23 Nobel Laureates on the picturesque island of Lindau, in Germany's Lake Constance.

The annual conference has been bringing together Nobel Laureates and young scientists since 1951. It is an opportunity for students to listen to lectures by Nobel Laureates and to chat with the prize winners in small groups.

This year, the conference convenes chemistry laureates, and there are two laureate panels: one deliberating the role chemistry can play in renewable energy, and another discussing global warming.

Attending the event is "a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," says Faroha Liaqat, a chemistry graduate student at Quaid-i-Azam University, in Pakistan. At the Lindau conference, Nobel Laureates feel "like rock stars," says Sir Harry Kroto, who won the 1996 Nobel Prize in Chemistry. "It's very stimulating to be here," 2007 Nobel Prize in Chemistry recipient Gerhard Ertl says. "The students are so bright and open-minded."

Besides talking chemistry with the Nobel Laureates, students discover that "Nobel Prize winners are normal people," says Britni J. Ratliff, a chemistry graduate student at the University of Chicago. Marissa Saunders, a chemistry graduate student at the University of Utah, says she feels encouraged by a chat with Ertl, who told students to stay strong when failure comes because it is an inevitable part of research. "It was good to hear that from a Nobel Laureate," Saunders adds.

The students who attend the Lindau conference go through a nomination and selection process in their home

countries.

The late Swedish Count Lennart Bernadotte initiated the annual meeting, which aims "to inspire, educate, and connect," his daughter, Countess Bettina Bernadotte, who now presides over the conference, said at the opening ceremony on June 28. To address the great challenges of our time, "we need knowledge, inspiration, and intellectual debate that transcends boundaries of discipline, of culture, or of geography," she told delegates. "We want you to use Lindau to make these connections."

This year's conference attracted more than just students and scientific celebrities. The president of the European Parliament, José Manuel Barroso, as well as Thailand's Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, attended the conference's opening ceremonies.

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